

against the Vietnam War in Los Angeles. The Chicanos from L.A. on the ship knew him, and they were angry and grief-stricken. The Cuban officials allowed them to try to get through to Los Angeles on the ship's radio, but the U.S. Coast Guard jammed it.

Another day we heard news that Sioux Indians had occupied the tourist center at Mt. Rushmore in the sacred Sioux Black Hills that had been defiled by the carvings of presidents' faces. The four Native Americans on the brigade were overjoyed.

The large group of blacks among us awaited news of Angela Davis. A major national womanhunt was in progress, but there was no trace of her. Interest was heightened by the presence of her sister, Fania, on our brigade. The huge white skyline of Miami, familiar to me only from pictures, appeared, and we entered the Caribbean Sea. We lost the U.S. Coast Guard and were joined by a porpoise, which the Cuban sailors said meant good luck. As we neared Cuba, I watched the porpoise and talked to it, plotting my escape. I could not imagine being stuck on a small island with those noisy, rude Americans—and certainly not with the Atlanta group, who were given to rebel yells, biblical references, and corny jokes—for two months. It was Sartre's version of hell. I was convinced that I'd made a serious mistake and had to escape quickly, for it would be harder to leave if I were to continue on to the island off Cuba where we were to work. I devised a plan: On arrival in Havana, I would feign illness and offer to reimburse the Cubans for my airfare back to Canada. I carefully rehearsed the conversation. It kept me sane.

We arrived late at night with the Havana skyline lit only by the moon—both for the conservation of electricity and for security, the Cubans told us. I stood near the upright gangplank aching to escape. A hundred Cubans who would spend the month on the small island working with us cheered and danced on the dock. As an Afro-Cuban band played, my resolve to return home weakened. I was actually in Cuba and the horrible journey seemed worth it.

We disembarked and climbed into waiting buses that plunged into the inky, moist night for a long drive around the coast to another port. There

we boarded a ferry, which felt like a luxury liner compared to the tub we'd lived in for nine days. There were clean bathrooms, lounge chairs, and something different to eat—ham and cheese sandwiches and beer. The mood among the brigade members changed. Instead of grumbling, we laughed and talked. I stood on deck and talked with two young men who'd just graduated from Notre Dame. Karl had lived the first twelve years of his life in Cuba until his family fled the revolution in 1959, and he spoke fluent Cuban Spanish. His friend, Chris, was quiet and thoughtful. Only twenty years old, he was uncertain about being in Cuba—Karl had persuaded him to go.

The sun rose as we docked on a black sand beach surrounded by the black marble cliffs of the Isle of Youth. The island had been called the Isle of Pines when it was used to maintain Batista's dreaded prison where Fidel was once incarcerated. After the revolution, the island was renamed *Isla de Juventud* (Isle of Youth). We jumped onto dozens of flatbed trucks that drove us the final few miles to the camp where we would live for a month. The facilities belonged to a women's reformatory; the inmates were relocated during our stay.

The camp was simple and rustic with two large, airy dormitories—one for men and one for women—lined with single beds, each surrounded by mosquito netting. The mattresses were stuffed with shredded sugar cane stalks and smelled of molasses. Beside each bed was a small cabinet for personal belongings. Each dorm had its own building with dozens of open-air showers and toilets. The toilets were holes in the ground surrounded by concrete. Behind the rest rooms was an area for both men and women to wash and line-dry clothes.

The dining hall was a cavernous building that doubled as a dance hall and movie theater at night. A compound that resembled a small suburban shopping center housed meeting rooms, administrative offices, and dormlike residences where the 100 Cubans stayed. And there was a prison beauty shop! It seemed that Cuban women took very seriously their revolutionary right to have their hair done by a professional.

The only other building was a lovely wooden cottage with a breezy,

wide porch all around it, the headquarters of the brigade director, Julian Rizo. The house was one of the many Cuban residences that Ernest Hemingway had owned and continued to use until his death a few years after the revolution.

Agricultural development had been initiated on the island a few years before. The overall development plan for the island projected large-scale citrus production, mainly for export. A few mature orchards were already producing grapefruit and oranges, which we picked and loaded. We also fertilized a large expanse of scrawny, newly planted trees. Our other task was to plant saplings.

The brigade comprised twenty sub-brigades, each with fifteen to twenty members, including the Cubans who worked with us. Each sub-brigade worked as a unit with a Cuban *jefe* (chief) assigned to each. Another brigade — autonomous and independent from us — was made up of Puerto Rican *independistas* from both the island and mainland United States.

We worked eight hours daily, six days a week, in citrus production. Early each morning in the dark we ate boiled codfish and rice and drank coffee with hot sweetened condensed milk. Then we jumped on the flatbed trucks and rode five miles to the citrus orchards. We were at work by the time the sun rose. We worked for two hours and then took a one-hour break (*la merienda*) during which the most remarkable event occurred: Sitting in the shade of grapefruit trees, we were served fancy pastries and presweetened, thick, black coffee in dainty china demitasse cups with saucers. After two more hours of work, we rode back to camp on the trucks for a three-hour lunch break, again consuming boiled cod, rice, and beans. After lunch and rest we were driven back to the orchards for another four hours of work, broken by another fancy *merienda*. At sunset, tired and dirty, we were trucked back to the camp where we lined up for a dinner of cod, rice, beans, and bread, and once or twice each week, homemade ice cream.

Slowly I became cognizant of the Cuban labor model we were a part of. The Cubans supervising us and working beside us were teachers, stu-

dents, civil servants, doctors, accountants — the proverbial blind leading the blind. The officials administering the brigade expected us to decide everything democratically; they didn't give orders, and at any rate, they knew no more about citrus production than we did. My sub-brigade *jefe* was an accountant with soft white hands that blistered just like ours. By rotating volunteers from among students and government and white-collar workers — each Cuban adult was required to contribute to this national service in all areas of blue-collar and agricultural labor — the more privileged Cubans experienced the misery of physical labor, whereas less privileged Cubans were provided opportunities to study medicine, agronomy, engineering, law, poetry, or film. At first, we had no sense of coordination or togetherness. We gringos yelled and blamed each other and accomplished very little. Patiently, our *jefe* would call us together to discuss the conflicts and problems. Almost imperceptibly, both the work and our relationships began to stabilize.

The work itself was exhausting and monotonous. Fruit picking required knocking the grapefruit down with a metal-tipped stick while others in the team picked up the fruit and packed it in baskets and others loaded the baskets on trucks. To fertilize the young trees we waded in waist-deep water carrying buckets filled with chemical powder that we scooped out with tin cans and sprinkled around the pitiful little trees. Planting wasn't fun either. The person in front used a short spade to dig a hole in which the next person would place a small plant with a gob of soil around its roots. This stoop work caused painful backaches. Long-forgotten childhood memories of migrant cotton picking and the image of Okie fruit pickers in California haunted me as I worked. For the first time, I fathomed the misery of dull, physical labor, and I wondered how people like my parents endured lifetimes of such work.

A steady stream of interesting visitors came to the camp to work alongside us for a day or two, sometimes for a week. A group of guerrilla fighters from the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands (PAIGG), who were in Cuba to rest and study, joined us once. The founder of PAIGG, Dr. Amilcar Cabral, was a university-

trained agronomist who had formed an independence movement to oust the Portuguese. Cabral—a self-trained historian and a great and gentle teacher—was one of my revolutionary heroes. Jose, one of the PAIGG members assigned to our sub-brigade, confirmed my impression.

"Cabral says that we are fighting to reclaim our history, that history stops for people when they are colonized. Part of the process of decolonization, more important than the fighting itself, is to pick up history where it left off."

As usual, the position of women plagued me. I asked Jose why there were no women in the PAIGG group. He said that women comprised the majority of regular members and were represented in the leadership of the organization, but that they could not be spared for foreign travel. I said to myself, "Oh, yeah, I've heard that before." My South African ANC friends in London had told me the same thing.

Jose carried the clumsy, heavy tin can filled with fertilizer on his head. He tried to teach me to do it and I practiced for hours, but I couldn't take two steps without having to grab the can. Jose sang as he worked and he worked hard, but he never struck out ahead of the rest of us. After he left us, we kept up the singing.

Two revolutionary exiles—a Brazilian and a Uruguayan—visited us for two weeks. The Brazilian man was a member of the group founded by Mariquella, the architect of urban guerrilla warfare that was fighting to overthrow the U.S.-backed military government in Brazil. The Uruguayan man was a member of the Tupamars. Most of the Tupamaro leaders, including founder Raul Sendic, were in prison, but terrible government repression was still taking place, and most of the victims were ordinary students and other young people as well as labor union members. The Uruguayan and Brazilian urban guerrilla movements stressed that urban guerrilla warfare was effective only to the extent that it ignited a mass movement or advanced an already existing mass movement.

A delegation of twenty Vietnamese stayed with us for a week. When they arrived, the entire brigade—men and women, young and middle-aged, northern and southern—gathered in the dining hall to greet them.

Most of the Vietnamese had been in combat and were in Cuba to rest or to receive medical care. They gave us rings made from downed U.S. planes. The metal bands had numbers etched on them—for example, my ring was made from the 350th U.S. plane that had been shot down.

At a gathering to greet the Vietnamese, Julian Rizo, the brigade director paid tribute to the delegation and explained the Cuban philosophy of solidarity as expressed in the slogan "*Como en Vietnam*." He described Cuba as a poor, rural, and underdeveloped country like Vietnam. Even though Cuba might be attacked at any time by the United States, Cuba was not at war; Vietnamese resistance made it possible for Cubans to live in peace, albeit under the Yankee blockade and with the legacy of colonialism. Since the Vietnamese were fighting on behalf of all the world's poor and oppressed, he said, in Cuba they said *Como en Vietnam*, meaning that Cubans should live as if they were Vietnamese and make sacrifices to support the Vietnamese struggle.

Rizo pointed out that Cuba offered the Vietnamese university scholarships and medical care, but that the most important project of all was sending milk to the children of Vietnam. For this project, the Cubans had to make personal sacrifices since there was a shortage of milk in Cuba. Rizo asked, rhetorically, "Why do we send milk instead of say, sugar or fish, which we have in abundance?" He answered: "We give what we have little of and need ourselves, not what we can easily spare. That is what we mean by *Como en Vietnam*. And that is what we learned from our beloved Ché."

I was crying when Rizo finished. I looked around and noticed that everyone was crying, including the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese were divided up so that each sub-brigade hosted a guest Vietnamese. Lam was assigned to ours. He was my age and had been a National Liberation Front ("Viet Cong") fighter for fifteen years. Tiny but unbelievably strong, he was in Cuba for malaria treatment. He asked me why I had come to Cuba, and I explained that the distorted publicity about me and the betrayal by one of my coworkers had convinced me that I needed to stop and learn, to understand who were my friends and who my enemies.

I was stunned by his response: "There are no friends. Be happy if you have few enemies." I was disturbed by his words until I realized that I am speaking from the point of view of a people whose history included a thousand years of foreign invasions.

I didn't feel I could be my true self with many members of the brigade, especially the African-American women. I was deeply troubled by their contempt for and ignorance of women's liberation. None of them had ever heard of me or Robin Morgan or Ti-Grace Atkinson, or for that matter black women like Fran Beal, Flo Kennedy, and Patricia Robinson. I found that extraordinary. They called women's liberation a "honky thing." It was becoming clear to me that women of color, both in the United States and all over the world, and also working-class women in general, would have to evolve their own forms of women's liberation that would be different from the overwhelmingly white women's movement. This realization reinforced my own growing awareness that I needed to become part of something more politically all-encompassing. Frank and I talked about our identity confusion. His health and outlook had improved, but he was very sad. He told me that the Asian Americans on the brigade, most of whom were Chinese Americans, refused to associate with him because they said that Japanese were not "oppressed" Asians. Frank accepted their argument, but also felt alienated among the whites. "I feel the same way. I'm part Indian but don't know anything about being Indian. I've tried to talk with the Indians here but they called me a wannabe when I told them about my background. With me, I think it's more class than race, and coming from a rural background, that makes me feel alienated in the movement. I never feel comfortable among middle-class urban people," I said.

"How will we ever be able to make a revolution if we are divided and hostile toward each other?" Frank said.

"That's what we have to figure out," I said.

Early on, Jessica, the head of the six-member RU collective on the brigade, contacted me to talk about working with them. I had known

they would be doing so because Mary Lou Greenberg had sent me Jessica's name when she invited me to join the collective. When Jessica approached me during the first week in camp, I told her I needed time to think about it. I wanted to be a free individual for a while. I needed time to think through who I was and where I was headed in the movement, and to assess the role of women's liberation in the revolution.

I finally did decide to join the RU collective in response to a situation that developed in the camp about ten days after we arrived. Theft had begun to occur daily. I had not brought anything of value, but others had expensive cameras, film, tape recorders, watches, money, and even drivers' licenses stolen. Personal notebooks and clothing disappeared, and soon food and knives began disappearing at night from the kitchen. Fistfights and threats accelerated in numbers and in viciousness. Most of the problems appeared to be a result of the recruitment of street kids and ex-cons. Some who'd joined the brigade seemed to regard it as a free vacation in the Caribbean and had had no idea they would have to work. Those kinds of culprits had been easily identified, and the worst offenders were sent back to the United States. But mysterious incidents continued.

There was no doubt that informers and agents provocateurs were present among us. The public announcement of the third brigade, unlike the first two—which were known only through word of mouth within movement circles—had surely alerted the FBI and other intelligence agencies. As word spread that there were most likely informers on the brigade, paranoia swept the camp and people withdrew into protective circles of friends, avoiding conversations with anyone they didn't know from past work together. There were fears of possible assassinations, fears that one of the Cubans might be killed, and, in particular, there was fear for Fania Davis's security. I had passing fears for my own safety, although I didn't tell anyone.

In the midst of all the disturbances, Rizo changed from civilian clothing to an olive military uniform and carried a 9mm Browning in a holster strapped around his narrow waist. Then Rizo requested that each of our sub-brigades select a representative to meet with him about the sit-

Cuban counterparts who had worked and lived with us for a month boarded buses bound for Havana and we boarded minibuses for a tour of the island. A group of Cuban interpreters joined us for the tour, one to each bus. The Cuban in our sub-brigade's bus was a young woman who had trained in the Soviet Union to be a linguist and a professional translator. We stopped in provincial capitals—Cienfuegos, Camaguey, Manzanillo—and in small towns. Feasts of lobster or crab or sea bass awaited us. We visited local schools and day care centers, small clinics and large hospitals, a fertilizer plant, and a dairy where a team of Czechs were training Cubans in artificial insemination. We slept in college dormitories and at campsites. In the evenings there was always dancing to a local band. One night we stayed in the camp of a construction "micro-brigade." In addition to volunteer professionals working at unskilled labor, skilled workers volunteered work on such projects as building houses, apartment buildings, hospitals, and schools. They received board, food, and transportation, but no pay. The crew we visited was building a school. They were carpenters, sheet metal workers, electricians, and plumbers. They slept and ate under a marque beside the work site.

There were a hundred or so men, young and middle-aged, black and white. We clustered in groups of five of us to one of them to share black beans and rice and talk at the long dining tables. I joined Sheila, Sharon, Karl, and Chris to talk with Octavio, a forty-five-year-old black man who had been organizing workers in Havana when he decided to go to the mountains and join the guerrillas in 1957.

"We Cuban workers owe a great debt to the North American workers' struggle. Every year we celebrate the International Workers Day on the first day of May, and we pay tribute to the martyrs of Haymarket. It is also the day we celebrate our own Cuban martyrs of the revolution," Octavio said.

"What's Haymarket?" Sharon asked. Everyone looked at me. I explained: In 1886, on May 1, the young American Federation of Labor called for strikes to demand the eight-hour day, and strikes broke out all over the country. A few days later in Chicago, thousands of workers, sur-

vation. My sub-brigade chose me. Jessica represented her sub-brigade, and she asked if I might be willing at least to meet with the RU collective daily to try to work out some ideas for playing a constructive role in ameliorating the situation. I agreed, and we met for an hour each day after lunch.

Our eight-member RU collective planned afternoon educational forums. I offered a twice-weekly discussion session on race, class, and gender. Other members of the RU collective organized discussion groups on imperialism, Marxism, racism, the Vietnam War. Our strategy was to create more brigade-initiated group activities in order to break the climate of paranoia. Incidents of theft and conflict decreased. I enjoyed the intense work with the RU collective, and we gained a reputation on the brigade as a kind of vanguard. The African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans each developed their own internal leadership and stayed aloof, relating directly to the Cubans. But they treated the RU collective with respect, and we met with their representatives regularly.

Rizo showed his appreciation for the discipline and hard work of the RU collective by meeting with us in his headquarters almost daily. Rizo was a tall and lithe Afro-Cuban in his early thirties, handsome, charming, and brilliant. He had been a sixteen-year-old youth leader in Havana at the time of the revolution. Our questions about racism intrigued him as they did all of the Cubans on the brigade—they didn't understand the separation of blacks and whites among us.

"I understand racism. As a black man, I have experienced it. We Cubans have to struggle against racism, but separation of comrades is not the solution," he said.

"It's different in the United States. The black movement is nationalistic and we have to respect their choice and follow their leadership," Jessica said.

"Be careful what leaders you choose to follow," Rizo said.

We finished our work and crossed back to mainland Cuba in early October. There, after much hugging and well-wishing, as well as tears, our

rounded by police, were demonstrating in Haymarket Square when a bomb exploded and killed seven policemen. The police fired into the demonstrators and killed dozens. They rounded up some well-known anarchists who were not even present when the bombing occurred, and without any evidence, put them on trial for murder and hung them. The campaign to save those men from death blossomed all over North America and in Central and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and Europe. May Day became International Workers Day. Now, practically the only place in the world where it was not a national holiday was where it began—the United States.

“My father marched in the May Day parades. Before the revolution it was a dangerous thing to do,” Octavio said.

“One thing is for sure, white U.S. workers will never be revolutionary again like they were back then and in the days of Haymarket. All they want now is a little house and a car and they march off to rich man’s wars without a question,” Karl said.

“I know that many workers in your country have more material wealth than we have, and I know their consciousness as workers is very low, but I do not believe they are content. What they don’t have is power, political power. They do not decide policy but only react to it. They have no control over their own lives or destinies; they have no dignity,” Octavio said.

“Wow, how do you know that about our workers?” I asked.

“I have worked there. Before the revolution, I worked on a banana boat. I am a black man, and until the revolution, we were not allowed skilled craft jobs like carpentry. I worked on the docks in New Orleans, San Pedro, San Francisco, and Honolulu. I know North American workers. They have no power.” I wished I could bring Octavio back with me to organize workers in the United States.

After midnight one day, our caravan pulled into slumbering Santiago de Cuba on the eastern end of the island, where the spark of revolution had been ignited in 1953. The only thing farther east was U.S.-occupied territory—the military base at Guantanamo. In the morning, we walked

down the hill to the Museum of the Revolution. The museum commemorated the July 26, 1953, raid by Fidel and his ragtag revolutionary band on the Moncada military barracks at Santiago.

On July 26, 1953, a group of 120 students with only a few rusty, single-shot rifles assaulted a minor military base called Moncada. There were only two women—Haydée Santamaría and Melba Hernández—among them. Their plan was to seize guns to start a revolution against the hated Batista, a dictator propped up by the United States and by United Fruit and the casino barons. In the countryside, United Fruit owned the sugar cane fields, and in Havana, gangsters from the United States had turned most of the population into prostitutes and pimps.

The rebels believed that once news of their deed got out, it would spark a mass uprising against the dictator. Predictably, Batista’s soldiers quickly crushed the inexperienced students. Most were killed on the spot or captured and tortured. Fidel was captured on his way to the mountains, but contrary to Batista’s orders, was not killed instantly because the black sergeant who recognized him didn’t tell anyone who he was, so no one knew until he was safely in prison and they were forced to put him on trial.

At his trial, Fidel defended himself—he had been a law student—and delivered his famous “history will absolve me” speech. He was sentenced to fifteen years in prison on the Isle of Pines. After two years in prison, he was released under a general amnesty for political prisoners and fled to Mexico to join other Cuban exiles organizing an armed invasion of Cuba. The general amnesty to release political prisoners came about as the result of grassroots organizing and popular pressure within Cuba and from abroad.

Ché Guevara, a young Argentine physician who had been traveling all over Latin America, joined them in Mexico. Soon the guerrilla army was able to reach Cuba and fight guerrilla warfare from the mountains. It would be another four years before the revolution triumphed on January 1, 1959.

The Museum of the Revolution was located in a plain, one-story frame building that had once been the Moncada military barracks. The

Afterward, we tied our hammocks between coffee trees and slept in the rain, using the plastic folded over the string as a roof, just as Ché had done.

The following day we bused several hours to the guerrilla front that Raul Castro, Fidel's brother, and sixty-seven men and women had established in 1958. The local farmers remembered well the days of the revolution fifteen years earlier, and they told us more stories of the revolution. In 1958, the guerrillas dynamited the Havana water and electric plants and rendered the airport runways useless. Batista ordered an all-out attack on their mountain stronghold. Peasants were tortured at random, terrorized, and killed.

The guerrillas' presence in the mountains and their successful attacks on military installations sparked strikes and demonstrations in Santiago, Havana, and smaller cities with a heavy death toll—over 20,000 urban civilians were killed by Batista's army before the guerrillas' triumph. When the revolutionaries began their march on Havana from all directions, Batista fled the country for the Dominican Republic. There his friend Trujillo, another dictator installed, financed, and kept in power by the United States, protected him.

As I listened to the peasants tell the familiar story, I remembered where I'd first heard it—as a nineteen-year-old listening to the news on a crystal radio when I worked at the gas company in Oklahoma City. I never imagined then that one day I would visit that place. "Tell us about the time the guerrillas kidnapped the Yankee race car driver and in exchange demanded tractors for the peasants!" I asked about one of the incidents that had most excited me at the time. The U.S. government had ransomed the race driver and sent tractors, whereupon the driver told the world about the humanity and just cause of the revolutionaries. The farmers all laughed and poked each other and told the story in detail.

During the final four days in Cuba, the brigade was housed at Veradero Beach, which before the revolution had been the most prized beach resort in the world for the rich and famous, especially businessmen from the

display contained only grainy black-and-white enlarged news clippings that told the story of that first failed act of the Cuban Revolution. The message was clear: Something large and historic might grow out of a small and even disastrous act.

The audacious act at Moncada seared my brain with its message: You must begin somewhere. Make a statement loud and clear so you will be heard, so the people will hear and be inspired to rise up. Act with courage and the people will respond. *La lucha armada*—armed struggle. Above all *no se rinde, no se vende*—never give up and never sell out.

On October 9, 1970, the third anniversary of Ché's assassination in Bolivia, our convoy halted at the foot of a mountain in a lush, tropical zone. There our brigade would retrace the steps of Ché Guevara and the men and women in his guerrilla unit to the site of their former encampment on the mountain. There would be a memorial at the site and Inti, one of the surviving members of Ché's guerrilla unit in Bolivia, would tell us the story of those two years in the Bolivian jungle. We would sleep in hammocks among the coffee trees just as Ché and the others had done. The provisions for the walk were exactly the items used by the guerrillas, as documented in Ché's manual, *Guerrilla Handbook*: a nylon hammock and a strip of plastic, each folded in a particular, compact way, and a ball of hemp string.

Ché and his guerrillas had declared the area liberated in 1958, and decreed land reform. There was still a small, functioning coffee processing plant, now a peasant cooperative, which the guerrillas had originally established. In addition to the coffee factory, they had created a newspaper, a radio station, and a clinic to care for the local peasants. The guerrillas would make forays out to attack Batista's forces and then retreat to that liberated zone.

When we got there, the porch of the wooden coffee shed had been turned into a stage for Inti. He began speaking around 9 P.M., and a soft, cold rain began. We all pulled out our plastic strips and held them over our heads. Soon the area where we stood was muddy. But we listened; Inti spoke without stopping for four hours.

United States. Grand ocean-front mansions were now used as conference and vacation facilities for Cuban organizations. Each sub-brigade had its own dormitory cottage in a large cluster of beach cottages, with attached showers and flush toilets. The grounds around us formed a tropical paradise with paved walkways. The beach sand was like bleached cake flour, the placid Caribbean a symphony of translucent blues and greens. Crabs a foot long and nearly as tall clacked along the paved pathways.

The next day I was among those invited to join the U.S. Brigade Committee in Havana to meet with the director and staff of the OSPAAAL, the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America. OSPAAAL was founded in 1966 to establish tricontinental solidarity and Tricontinental was the name of the journal that the organization published in many languages. In 1965, Ché had traveled all over Africa and built links between the Cuban Revolution and progressive African governments and national liberation movements. Up until that time, Latin American revolutions and peoples' movements had been isolated from the rest of the world and were considered to be under the thumb of U.S. imperialism.

After a long and interesting discussion, our hosts gave us gifts of posters, all of them featuring anti-colonial struggles in many languages. They displayed their English language publications for us to choose from. I picked a new biography of Luis Turcios Lima, a Guatemalan revolutionary who had died in a 1967 car wreck.

We also visited Margaret Randall, a U.S. writer living in Havana. I didn't recognize her name at first, but she reminded me that we had corresponded during 1968 and 1969 after she had seen NO MORE FUN AND GAMES. Then I remembered—she had been in Mexico, publishing a bilingual literary journal, *El Corno Emplumado/The Plumed Horn*. She had recently arrived in Cuba, having fled there as a victim of the brutal Mexican government repression that followed the 1968 massacre of students in Mexico City. Margaret told a harrowing story about hiding out for months and having to send her children ahead of her to Cuba until she could join them.

That night I read *The Life History of Turcios Lima*. In the fall of 1960, Luis Turcios Lima was a nineteen-year-old Guatemalan army lieutenant who had been trained at Fort Benning, Georgia by the U.S. Rangers. He and another young lieutenant, Yon Sosa, who had been trained by the Americans in Panama, led half of the Guatemalan army in revolt against the military government. That was the first stirring of rebellion in Guatemala since the 1954 CIA coup that overthrew the democratic government and installed the military. The rebellion was crushed with a little help from the United States, but Turcios Lima, Yon Sosa, and other soldiers escaped and reorganized to lead a guerrilla war. They were hidden and supported by the peasants. Turcios Lima made contact with the Guatemalan Communist Party, and even received moral support from Fidel Castro. The guerrillas made military gains for several years, but in 1966, the United States provided nearly \$20 million and Green Beret trainers to the Guatemalan military government to carry out counter-insurgency. They provided napalm for use against the guerrillas, wiping out the peasant population that supported them. The napalm was a trial run for the scorched-earth strategy to be used later in Vietnam.

The book made a deep impression on me, and I wondered why I had chosen it. I couldn't help but think of the Weather Underground and their military strategy, their assumption that the people would simply rise up in revolution if the guerrillas made brave acts of violence. I realized that the lessons of Guatemala and the Moncada uprising in Cuba were more complex than that. Workers and students of those countries had long been organized and militant. This confirmed my sense of doing the right thing by joining the Revolutionary Union.

The day before we left Cuba, we waited for Fidel in the Plaza of the Revolution in Havana. We were told that Fidel was intentionally always late for security purposes and reminded that the CIA had failed in dozens of assassination attempts. The entire brigade clustered in front of the stage wearing our bright orange T-shirts with BRIGADA VENCEREMOS emblazoned on the front, and our straw work hats. We each sported an

oval, dime-size, gold-plated pin with "VB" and a tiny red star engraved in red.

The plaza was packed with very ordinary-looking people, most of them middle-aged and elderly. The occasion was the tenth anniversary of the Defense of the Revolution—CDRs—and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution—CDRs—all over people gathered there had come from neighborhood committees that had sprung up in many Manhattan neighborhoods, except that in Cuba they were armed, and the possible trouble was not burglary or muggings but rather, another U.S. invasion. The CDRs also provided services in the community and negotiated family and neighborhood conflicts. The CDRs were the center of U.S. propaganda against Cuba; Cuban exiles accused them of spying on neighbors and claimed that people hated them in Cuba. I saw nothing but love and respect for them.

Fidel appeared. He was huge; his nickname, *El Caballo*—the horse—suited him. We had earphones attached to small cordless radios for translation, but after a few minutes I stopped using mine. Fidel's Spanish was simple and clear. He spoke slowly and didn't use Cuban idioms or slang that I couldn't understand. First, he made a few political remarks, paying lukewarm tribute to Egyptian president Nasser who had died that day, and passionately noted the recent Vietnamese victories over U.S. forces. Then he launched into a lecture on hydroelectric power—explaining how hydroelectric dams killed fish and how electrical energy came at a great cost to the environment.

The message was to turn off the lights and accept that cities should not be lit up at night as Havana and Santiago used to be. I had never considered the waste involved in lighting U.S. cities at night.

The Cubans in the plaza listened intently and the lecture was being televised for broadcast all over the country. I was impressed at what a gifted orator Fidel was. I thought of my mother—she would have loved Fidel as much as Oral Roberts, and she would have learned something of value. Some of the brigade members, including Karl, were disappointed that Fidel didn't talk about revolution.

"I think he was talking about revolution," I said.

Back in the camp, we were told the news that Angela Davis had been captured in New York. Her sister Fania would fly back to Canada rather than take the ship with us.

I walked to the beach and stood on the soft, white sand that glowed in the moonlight, listened to the swish and shuffle of the surf, and looked north toward the United States. I felt the heaviness of that massive stolen continent. I did not want to return. I knew hard times lay ahead.

In mid-October, we sailed north on the same Cuban ship as before. Everyone on board, even the crew, was seasick because of the roughness of the Caribbean at that time of year. After two days at sea, I became aware that something remarkable was going on: The rest rooms were spotless, every bed in the dormitory neatly made. People spoke courteously in hushed tones. No one grabbed for food or took too much. We hugged and touched each other when we talked, even with total strangers.

After nearly two months together, we still didn't all know each other personally, but now there were no strangers among us. No longer did blacks, Latinos, Asians, and whites separate. I saw Frank laughing and talking with a group of Chinese Americans. We functioned like a well-trained army without anyone giving orders or checking on our performance.

We had become a community. The potential of humanity revealed itself to me in that slice of time. I now knew, and I promised myself never to forget, the beauty, the drama, and the possibilities of human transformation. Even we gringos could change, could become generous and unselfish, could share and care. If only thousands and thousands of people could participate in such an experience, they could become a critical mass and gain social hegemony. I realized that the Venceremos Brigade was not only a much-needed time off for me and others, but rather, an important project in our attempt to build a revolutionary movement. How to sustain what we had learned became the question and challenge.

On October 19, 1970, our ship pulled into St. John's harbor just after Canada declared a state of siege in Quebec Province. The ship was not allowed to dock. The Quebec Liberation Front—the FLQ—had kid-

napped and killed two government officials and a massive manhunt was in progress.

After hours of sitting at bay awaiting permission to dock, the Cuban officials brought us together in the dining hall to inform us of the problem. It seemed the CIA had convinced its Canadian intelligence counterpart that the Cuban ship was carrying assault weapons and guerrilla reinforcements for the FLQ's use in overthrowing the government of Quebec. We had no knowledge of the diplomatic exchanges that took place during the long hours—an entire day and night—that led to our release.

Buses were waiting to transport us back to our points of departure. Instead of taking the Atlanta bus with the rest of my sub-brigade, I would go to Boston to visit Cell 16. Jessica was from Boston and wanted to visit her family before returning to California, and she and I would fly together to San Francisco to meet with the RU leadership regarding my membership.

All the way to the border, the highway was lined with Canadian army tanks and troops, and helicopters whirred above us. I hid the small items I'd acquired in Cuba—my birthday present Mao book, the brigade pin, the Vietnamese ring—in my boots.

At the border, U.S. immigration officers took everything I'd brought from Cuba—my Turcios Lima book, the OSPAAAL posters, the brigade T-shirt, even my plastic sandals. But they didn't body search me and did not detect that my work boots were from Cuba.

From downtown Boston, I took the subway to Central Square in Cambridge to catch the bus to Watertown, about five miles away. After I moved to New Orleans, Hannah and some other women had rented a large house together that they planned to turn into a battered women's shelter. As I waited in my old neighborhood for the bus, the surroundings were familiar yet strange. Culture shock. Violence was in the air, palpable murderous violence that noise and speediness alone could not account for—no one was noisier and speedier than the Cubans. Two

men approached me. One, leering, looked straight into my eyes and said, "You wanna fuck, baby?"

I stared back into his eyes, bewildered, not angry, and then I broke into tears. I was not afraid, but I felt deeply wounded. The man said to his companion, "Sicko dame," and they walked briskly past me. I'd left my armor on the Isle of Youth, and I knew I could not survive in the United States without it.

VII  
DESPERADA

THE TWO BEAUTIFUL autumn days I spent in Boston were filled with news, including sad news about Cell 16. The Socialist Workers Party had infiltrated the group, and they had recruited the Emmanuel College members, thereby becoming a majority of the collective. Abby and Dana had cleaned out the office and closed it down, but had given up fighting for control. They would publish one more issue of the journal before it, too, was appropriated by the Trotskyists.

Hannah wanted my opinion about the activities of the Weather Underground, which included breaking Dr. Timothy Leary, the LSD guru, out of jail. The Weather communiqué made silly connections:

Communiqué #4 from the Weatherman Underground:  
September 15, 1970. This is the fourth communication from the Weatherman Underground.

The Weatherman Underground has had the honor and pleasure of helping Dr. Timothy Leary escape from the POW camp at San Luis Obispo, California.

Dr. Leary was being held against his will and against the will of

Jane Franklin took me on a tour of their organizing projects from Redwood City to San Jose, a forty-mile stretch on the west side of the San Francisco Bay. I visited collective meetings and a community health center and preschool in the Chicano barrio of Redwood City. I met dozens of "cadre," as RU members were called. Many of them were undergraduate and graduate students at Stanford, but there were also students at working-class colleges—San Jose City College, DeAnza College, and San Jose State University. Other cadre were high school students organizing in their schools, Vietnam vets organizing at Fort Ord, a hippy couple who worked with runaway street kids, even a biker who was trying to organize a revolutionary motorcycle club. All were dedicated and motivated. I detected no signs of dogmatism or factionalism. Everyone was friendly and enthusiastic, even fun. These were people I liked, people with whom I wanted to be associated.

Barry and Mary Lou Greenberg, who had been affiliated with the Stanford group when the RU was formed, now appeared to be more in agreement with Avakian, but they were quite friendly to me. Mary Lou wanted me to meet Lawrence and Betty Sue Goff, an RU working-class family, and I was anxious to do so. Betty Sue was originally from northern Mississippi, and Lawrence was from Michigan. Mary Lou said that the Goffs had gone to Central America as fundamentalist missionaries and ministered to the Indians for five years. After they returned, Lawrence Goff had been ordained as a Church of God pastor. Then he enrolled at San Jose City College and his eyes were opened about the Vietnam War and U.S. imperialism, and he joined the RU group on campus; soon after he recruited Betty Sue. And, on top of it all, Lawrence was a gunsmith and provided and repaired the weapons kept in all RU houses. It sounded too good to be true, and it was.

The Goffs lived in a two-bedroom frame house, a familiar kind of working-class house that made me feel comfortable with its plastic curtains, worn shag carpet, paint-by-numbers wall hangings, and easy chairs. There were three barefoot children, and a toddler in a playpen. The Goffs looked like they were in their mid-forties, although Mary Lou said they

millions of kids in this country. He was a political prisoner, captured for the work he did in helping all of us begin the task of creating a new culture on the barren wasteland that has been imposed on this country by Democrats, Republicans, Capitalists and creeps.

LSD and grass, like the herbs and cactus and mushrooms of the American Indians and countless civilizations that have existed on this planet, will help us make a future world where it will be possible to live in peace.

Now we are at war . . .

And, it seemed, there were new underground groups popping up everywhere. I told Hannah that their threats and acts of violence pained me, and that I was grateful for having found an organization and a direction. I looked forward to my meetings with the RU in San Francisco.

On the flight to California, Jessica and I discussed our ideas for organizing the next Venceremos Brigade. She said that she was going to recommend that the RU give priority to brigade work. I told her that the brigade national committee had invited me to be one of the regional representatives for the South to organize and recruit for the next brigade. But when we arrived in San Francisco, bad news awaited us. While we were in Cuba, the RU had begun to split along the fault line of the two organizations that had merged two years before—the group around Bruce Franklin at Stanford and Bob Avakian's original Bay Area Revolutionary Union. Now they were in a power struggle.

The Franklins' interpretation of their differences with Avakian was that Avakian had backed away from supporting the Black Panther Party. And, it seemed, Avakian was opposed to my recruitment because he questioned women's liberation. In a few days, a central committee meeting would be held to discuss my membership. The Franklins assured me that if a split occurred, they would continue under their former organizational name, Venceremos (unrelated to the Cuban brigades), and that I was welcome to join. I agreed to stay in the Bay Area until after the meeting in order to clarify the situation.

were both thirty years old. Betty Sue wore a housedress. Lawrence looked like a country preacher. On first sight, I was excited that ordinary white working-class people would join a Marxist organization.

Mary Lou told the Goffs that I'd just returned from Cuba and had worked with the RU collective on the brigade.

"I'm from Oklahoma and now live in New Orleans. I understand you're originally from Mississippi, Betty Sue," I said.  
"I am, but I haven't hardly lived there. My daddy was in the navy and we lived all over," she said.

"And you all were missionaries in Central America? You must have traveling in the blood," I said.

"Yes, my husband had the calling, and we spent a year all over the place down there, then two whole years on an island off Panama with Indians. We brought a lot of people to Christ," she said. There was no humor or regret in Betty Sue's voice or face.

"So you're still a believer?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. We're raising them kids on the Bible," she said. Lawrence shifted in his chair but said nothing. Mary Lou beamed proudly.

"Aren't they amazing?" Mary Lou said as we drove back to Palo Alto. "There's something wrong. There's no way those people can be leftist revolutionaries," I said.

Mary Lou turned her head sharply, her soft blue eyes angry. "What do you mean?" Her voice was icy.

I took a deep breath. "They're still into fundamentalism."

"So? Cesar Chavez is a devout Catholic. Martin Luther King was a Baptist preacher. There are all kinds of dedicated religious people in the world that are revolutionaries. How do you expect to have a revolution with just intellectuals?"

"I don't doubt that a revolutionary can be a religious person. But white Protestant fundamentalism is different. It comes in a package that includes superpatriotism, especially when war is involved and the flag is challenged. It's like Nazism. I grew up with it, and I know. And it's a fact that what U.S. fundamentalists carry as missionaries is not religion, but

Americanism. They do it through bribery and they work hand in glove with dictators and the CIA in Latin America."

I had known about such practices for years, from studying Latin American history, but also from returned Peace Corps volunteers. I found it hard to believe that the RU leaders were so naive.

"And they can't change?" she asked.

"Sure they can. I did. But the Goffs haven't changed."

Mary Lou took the Mountain View exit, still a long way from Palo Alto, and parked. She turned to me.

"I think you are being elitist and divisive. The Goffs are our most devoted members, and they are authentic working-class people. We trust them absolutely. I want to hear no more of this and do not repeat what you have said to anyone. It is divisive."

She peeled out and drove on in silence to Palo Alto. I thought about the Left's romanticization of the working class, a kind of objectification that I couldn't help but feel personally. Revolutionary organizations made up of mostly privileged whites tended to exoticize the working class and people of color, and this artificial relationship and uncritical acceptance of people based on class and race made me feel wary and disenchanted. "It'll take a while for you to understand the proletarian nature of our organization." Mary Lou said as I got out of the car. I felt I was beginning to understand it all too well and had the helpless feeling of everything falling apart. It had felt so good to think I knew where I fit in.

(Less than a year later, in October 1974, Lawrence and Betty Sue Goff, as admitted paid FBI informers, testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Internal Security in their investigation of "American Maoists.")

The Greenbergs, the Franklins, and two men representing Avakian met with me. They were not debating whether I should be accepted as a member, but rather, the status of my membership. The Avakian group wanted my membership to be secret, while the Franklins wanted it to be open. Bruce Franklin presented his view: "The purpose of secret membership is to protect that person's security or job. Roxanne was an open

member for weeks on the brigade. Everyone knows, including the FBI by now, Roxanne has no position to protect—she's a full-time revolutionary, already as radical and with much the same line as the RU. What's the purpose of her being a secret member?"

"Closed membership is also for a well-known person who needs to adjust to the RU before being a public spokesman. Take Roxanne, and you take women's liberation. That would distort the organization's line," Barry Greenberg said.

"Never have we used closed membership to muffle a member's views," Bruce said.

The argument continued for hours. I expected Mary Lou to bring up my "elitism" to support her husband's position, but she didn't. Nothing was resolved, but Barry promised to arrange a meeting between Avakian and me within a few days. I was exhausted. I told them I would stay no more than a week longer, and they agreed. I called Homer and asked him to fly out for the discussion with Avakian.

We finally met a few days later. Homer and I sat at a kitchen table in a house in the blue-collar part of Richmond, a town north of Berkeley. Avakian straddled a chair turned backward, his arms propped on the back of it. He reminded me of the bantam rooster we used to have when I was a kid. His green eyes were small and cold and his mustache resembled Hitler's. Avakian had objected to Homer sitting in on the meeting, but finally relented. He hardly acknowledged Homer's presence, even though they had met at national SDS meetings during the mid-sixties when Homer was national vice-president of SDS and Avakian was a local Bay Area officer.

Two other men who were not introduced to us stood, arms folded. One leaned against the door that led outside and he looked out the window every few minutes. The other man leaned against the door to the next room. All three men wore identical light blue work shirts, faded Levis, lace-up work boots, and dark blue Mao caps with Mao buttons on them.

"So you think the Richmond collective is made up of male chauvinist pigs. You want to be a little more specific and scientific in your analy-

sis?" Avakian said. He had grown up in the Berkeley Hills, son of an affluent judge, but he spoke in an imitation worker's style. He turned and looked at one and then the other of his comrades, and they all laughed. I was terrified of those men, not personally, but for the first time since I'd considered myself a leftist, the thought crossed my mind that fascism was not limited to the right wing. Juan Perón in Argentina, Huey P. Long of Louisiana, and Mussolini were all authoritarian proworker radicals. A poster of Stalin loomed over Avakian's kitchen table.

"Well?" Avakian said.

"I didn't come here to talk about male chauvinism; I came here to discuss my status as an open or closed member of the RU. I understand that you are the only one of the leadership committee who wants my membership to be secret," I said.

"Who told you that, the Franklins? Breaking still another party rule, divulging leadership discussions. You also seem to have a flair for talking behind comrades' backs."

"I've been trying to have a meeting with you for seventeen days," I said.

"I'm a busy man, organizing the working class, not lolling around on a rich man's university campus like your friend Bruce Franklin. Now, explain to us about this male chauvinism complaint of yours."

"I haven't even used that term since I've been in the Bay Area, and that's not the issue," I said.

"But we want to know. See, we're here listening, awaiting criticism." He spread his arms like Jesus on the cross. The other two men laughed.

Homer stood up. "We have very little time, Bob. Roxanne and I are here to seriously discuss linking up with the RU. Can we get to that issue, please?" Homer was polite but there was a sharp edge in his voice that I'd never before heard.

Avakian didn't respond to Homer but kept staring at me.

"Come on, tell us about it," he said. Alternating flashes of anger and cold hatred welled up in me. I said nothing.

"Chairman Mao says that comrades must always criticize other com-

rades face to face. Have you studied the *Little Red Book*?" He held the small book in his palm facing me like a magician showing a playing card. "Of course I have, in English and in Spanish. And I have not talked behind comrades' backs," I said.

"What about the Goffs? Didn't you try to cast suspicion on them and divide comrades?"

"The Goffs are not the issue. My membership is," I said.

"I want you to criticize our male chauvinism to our faces, then go to the Panthers and tell them, if you like them so much. They'll laugh at you. You think I haven't read what you've written?"

"Let's get out of here, Homer. This meeting is a waste of time," I said. I was devastated by the turn of events, as was Homer, who agreed that we needed to be a part of something larger. Our despair undoubtedly contributed to a bad political choice that presented itself. Before leaving the Bay Area, we spent an evening with an acquaintance of Homer's from early SDS, a highly respected leader who had become involved in building support for fugitive Black Panthers.

"You know, the heat is really coming down hard on the Panthers. They're getting busted and killed all over the country. Most are local community organizers, not big names like Fred Hampton was," he said. "We know. We were in Houston when Carl Hampton died after being gunned down by the police," I said.

"Does your group down there have the resources and the capacity to set up some safe houses in case they're needed?" The man asked.

"You mean in people's houses?" I asked.

"Maybe, if there are people you can really trust, but it would be better to rent small apartments in racially mixed neighborhoods. Isn't New Orleans pretty mixed?" He asked.

"Most of it, except the very rich area that's all white and the projects that are all black," Homer said. Homer knew every inch of greater New Orleans by then.

"We need furnished apartments in big, racially mixed apartment complexes where people move in and out a lot, so a Panther, say, could live

there and not be noticed for being black, but your people could come and go as well without standing out. See what I mean?"

"How many are you thinking about?" I asked.

"Even one would be helpful. Two or three would be ideal. You know it's good to have at least one safe house for your own group if the heat comes down."

"We'll have to discuss it with others in the group," I said. Homer nodded.

"Just call when you've decided and say yes or no and an estimate of time before it's set up. It would be a big help."

And so, we left the Bay Area with a completely different agenda than when we had arrived.

A week after we returned to New Orleans, the RU wrote demanding that I return to the Bay Area to answer to "contradictory" statements I had made, and to settle the issue of my membership. I wrote a long letter outlining everything that had occurred from my point of view, and suggested that if they wanted to talk with me, they would have to come to New Orleans. But the RU was history.

The *Stanford Daily News* reported the Revolutionary Union had split, and a call from Jane Franklin confirmed that the Franklins and their followers had taken the name "Venceremos," while Avakian and company retained the RU title (later becoming the Revolutionary Communist Party).

The first few days back in New Orleans, Sheila, Homer, and I walked and talked. We decided that the three of us would secretly develop safe houses while we continued our public projects—the women's group, community control of police, and we'd help organize the fourth Brigade to Cuba.

Homer called our contact in California: "Yes, by May Day," he said into the telephone.

It was the end of November 1970, and an icy wind blew off the Potomac in Washington, D.C., I huddled, shivering, with thousands of mostly young, white movement people outside a church listening to the voice

of Bobby Seale over a loudspeaker. A line of black-clad Panther men stood guard in front of the church. When the Black Panther Party had called for a "Revolutionary Peoples Constitutional Convention" for Thanksgiving weekend, they had expected a few hundred participants. Instead, thousands of politically charged young people arrived from all over the country.

The elite—Panther leaders and their families and notable leftists and lawyers—occupied the church. I held an invitation but it didn't impress the Panther guards. I stood with everyone else out in the cold. Heavily armed riot police grouped in tactical formations around the periphery of the crowd, and I heard someone near me say that the National Guard was on alert. Tension crackled in the cold air.

Toward midnight, as the meeting wound down, the crowd began to disperse in all directions. Scuffles with the police broke out. A new-model Ford pulled up beside me—it was Gi Schaefer from New Orleans. I assumed he was there for the Panther event too, even though his organization, the Progressive Labor Party, despised the Panthers. "Get in, I'll give you a ride," he said. I hesitated getting into the car with Gi, but I wanted out of there. He frantically drove around in circles, running into police barricades. And then he did what I considered to be an extraordinary thing. He stopped and asked a cop for directions, and his manner made me aware that Gi Schaefer was some kind of cop. I wanted to get out of that car, and I asked him to stop at the next bus stop. (In 1973, Gi Schaefer and his wife Jill were exposed as FBI operatives when they attempted to airlift unsolicited weapons to the American Indian Movement at Wounded Knee.)

Police surveillance and infiltration would only grow worse. More than half of the fugitives on the FBI's most wanted list were charged with politically motivated crimes. There were so many agents provocateurs and informers that it was thought that half the membership of some organizations were infiltrators. Even the alternative literary presses and moderate antiwar and peace groups were not exempt. The FBI, using provocateurs, was also partly responsible for the violent direction the movement was

taking. Inexplicable suicides and accidental deaths were being reported among former participants of the Venceremos Brigades. In the growing atmosphere of surveillance and danger, the necessity to develop a clandestine structure began to seem like the only way to continue our work.

On the eve of the New Year of 1971, we invited everyone we knew in New Orleans to a feast in celebration of the eleventh anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. It was also a welcome party for Hannah, who had decided to come to work with us in New Orleans. Sheila, Hannah, Homer, Laura, and I shopped and cooked all day long. We cleared the worktables in the office, pushed them against the walls, and transformed them into a smorgasbord, making the center of the room into a dance floor.

By midnight, every scrap of food was devoured and chicken carcasses littered the table. Someone began "Auld Lange Syne" but a faction of the older leftists singing the "Internationale" drowned it out. Then the guns of New Orleans New Year muted all voices. Practically everyone in New Orleans fired live ammunition out windows and doors for five to ten minutes at the stroke of midnight, and every year a few people were wounded or killed. I stood on the balcony overlooking the garden and watched the flashes of fire. Robert joined me there, and I asked him to help me take LSD. Robert was a poet who, with his companion Darlene, published the *NOLA Express*, the New Orleans exemplar of the burgeoning "underground press." I wanted to take acid as a way of searching for truth. I wanted to know if I was ready to go anywhere or do anything, as Dylan sang. Robert smiled. "You'll never regret it. When?"

"How about right now?"

"Get a little sleep. I need to get a few things; I'll come back at sunrise." When Robert tapped on the door, the city was silent except for the crow of roosters and an occasional train whistle or foghorn along the river. I'd been up for an hour sitting by the window, waiting for daybreak, absorbing the silence.

Robert boiled water and brewed herbal tea. He placed a small square of thin paper on a saucer and handed it to me. "It's rice paper soaked in

acid. Just let it melt on your tongue then drink the tea. The effect will be gradual, but you'll really feel it after a half hour. I'll stay with you but you can ignore me completely if you wish."

I pressed the sweet paper to my tongue, feeling a little silly. Listening to other peoples' accounts of their fantastic trips was like listening to their dreams, always more interesting to the person who had them than anyone else. I knew what to expect—merging of the senses, tastes that made sounds, sounds that produced pictures, seeing words as they came out of the mouth, and maybe some terrifying visions too. And I wasn't disappointed.

I felt safe and unafraid in Robert's care. He sat watching me like a guardian angel while the acid took effect. His thick glasses reflected my face, which now looked like a cartoon of the man in the moon.

"Do you have some poems with you?" I asked, and heard my voice echo off the walls. He unpacked his canvas shoulder bag and piled loose pages on the desk.

"You poets are like an ancient tribe who reproduce yourselves all over the world, generation to generation. Too bad poets can't rule the world," I said.

"Then we wouldn't be poets anymore." His words resonated profoundly. I saw the words come out of his mouth, and each one had a glowing silver-blue tail.

"I'd rather be a poet than a politico. But I'm no good at either," I said. "You are a part of another ancient tribe that reproduces itself—the tribe of the visionary, the revolutionary. You are the descendant of Buddha, Mohammed, Jesus, Gandhi, Ché," he said.

"There are no women in that House." I saw the word "House" with a capital "H."

"There was Ruth, Jeanne d'Arc, and before that a long line of goddesses. But that's your mission, isn't it, to bring back the female vision? That's why you are a revolutionary."

My mind drifted away. A glass of water sat on the table beside me. The water assumed the dimensions of a lake. I was beside a lake, and then it dis-

appeared. I sipped from the glass and a drop fell on the table. It was studded with sapphires and emeralds. I raised my hands to my face and when I moved them away, my fingers left a trail of silver that formed wings. A long time seemed to pass and I was inside my mind. I sat at the desk. Robert spread food on the table and poured a glass of thick golden liquid.

"I don't like raw eggs," I said.

"Taste it. It's apricot juice. You will like it."

I took a drink and felt the juice flow through a network of a million blood vessels. It soothed my body. I was a little girl, high in the mulberry tree behind our house. My brother Hank sat on the branch across from me. It was a hot summer day, but cool up there in the dense branches. My hands were purple from the ripe berries, my mouth filled with the delicious sweetness.

"I had a happy childhood," I said.

I ate the fresh-baked bread. I tasted the yeast. I watched my mother kneading bread and I chewed on a wad of yeast taken from a tiny square package. I knew if my mother disappeared, I would die. As long as I did not take my eyes off her, she would not disappear. I smelled the bread baking and watched her sitting at the table, writing. I heard the pencil scrape the rough newsprint.

"I was a brave child. I had asthma. My mother took care of me," I said. My entire life flashed before me like an old-time, speedy, silent movie.

I heard a knock on the door and a stranger's voice say, "Roxanne." My mood changed to terror and I cowered in the corner. Robert sat beside me and took my hands. "It's only Homer."

I saw a thin, white object slide under the door and heard footsteps fading.

"What's that thing? It's a letter bomb."

Robert walked to the door and picked up the object. "It's a note from Homer, just to tell you that he and Hannah and Sheila are going to the park."

"I remember who they are. They are my children. They think I know everything." I felt very sad. I nodded off.

The room was golden and shimmering when I woke, the sun setting. I felt refreshed and clearheaded. Robert sat on the floor writing in his notebook. He got up and brought me a plate of spumoni. The frozen dried fruit in it exploded flavor in my mouth.

"Thanks, Robert. You can leave me alone now." Then I slept twelve hours.

In New York City that January, the view was gray and bleak. There was no snow or ice, but the temperature hovered at about ten degrees at mid-day. I'd taken the early flight from New Orleans that morning, and upstairs in the building I sat in front of, a meeting of the National Venceremos Brigade and regional coordinators was in its second hour. Instead of participating directly in the meeting, I was doing security. When I'd arrived in New York for the meeting, René, a member of the National Venceremos Committee, had picked me up at the airport. A younger black man named Tommy was driving. René asked if I'd be willing to do security with Tommy and skip the meeting. He explained the potential threat from cops and Omega, the Cuban exile terrorist outfit.

"Hopefully nothing will happen. We'll have someone sit at the window inside the apartment and you can signal if there's trouble. Omega operatives are well trained in urban guerrilla tactics, thanks to American taxpayers, by the way. They throw firebombs from speeding cars or motorcycles. They disguise themselves as utilities workers, postmen, beggars. Everything that moves should be suspect."

"Why me? I've never done anything like this," I said.

"Come on, *compa*, everyone knows about your women's street patrols in Boston," René said. Coming from René, who had been in the Special Forces in Vietnam, I felt flattered by this.

As I sat in the passenger seat of Tommy's brand-new red sports car, my bare hands sought warmth inside the deep pockets of my navy pea coat.

I felt the hard steel of the loaded pistol that I had tucked into the front of my jeans when René gave it to me. Tommy was a twenty-year-old black man, now a college student, who'd grown up in a working-class

Queens neighborhood. He had been on the same brigade to Cuba as I had, but we hadn't met there.

"You hungry?" Tommy asked.

"Starving." Except for orange juice and a doughnut on the flight, I hadn't eaten since dinner the night before.

"I'll go pick up some sandwiches on the corner." Tommy took his pistol out of his jeans and slid it under the car seat—unlike Louisiana, carrying a concealed handgun in New York was illegal. His weapon was identical to the one he'd loaned me, a kind of weapon I'd never seen before—a German-made Walther PPK, a dull black 9mm automatic that resembled a miniature machine gun. Tommy said the model was Huey Newton's favorite weapon.

Tommy returned with a paper bag of sandwiches, potato chips, pickles, and coffee. And one perfect, dark red rose. He extended the rose to me. "Isn't that what women's lib is about? Bread and roses?" I thought of the Lowell, Massachusetts, textile mill strikes by the young factory girls in the 1840s, and their demand for "bread, and roses, too."

"I guess for me it's more like bread and guns," I said and we laughed.

"Why not have it all? Guns, roses, and bread?" The meeting broke up around 5 P.M. and we all went to eat Chinese food in a Cuban-Chinese restaurant on the second floor of a building on Amsterdam Avenue. After the long dinner and talk, Tommy drove me to the South Bronx where I was to stay the night in his deceased grandmother's apartment.

"We call the Bronx a war zone, lots of drugs and gangs, but you'll be safe inside the apartment. There's a doorman and you'll be on the twelfth floor. Just don't leave the apartment until I come for you in the morning," he said. Tommy then started to put padlocks on each of the wheels and on the hood latch of his car. I began to feel uneasy.

"Why are you doing that?" I asked.

"Even though I'll just be up there for fifteen minutes, this car would be cannibalized in that time." There were no other cars parked on the block. Glass covered the pavement and sidewalks.

The apartment was tiny—a living room crowded with musty furniture, a bedroom barely large enough for the double bed, and a small kitchen. Everything was immaculate.

“Look here. In this closet is a shotgun loaded with double ought. When I leave, put this police lock across the door and don’t open it for anyone but me. Here’s my phone number and René’s.” He showed me how to secure the two dead bolts and the police lock—it looked like a lead pipe across the door.

“I’ll pick you up around eight in the morning.” He and René and I were going to drive up to New Hampshire to speak at a university.

After Tommy left, I took a tab of LSD, the extra tab Robert had left for me back on New Year’s Day. I had decided to test myself for in unfamiliar circumstances without support, to prepare myself for uncontrollable circumstances. It was a stupid thing to do. The acid kicked in, and this time it was a bad trip, hurtling me into a parallel universe to the devastated urban neighborhood outside, where the poor and forgotten hid behind locked doors, the barren streets abandoned to thieves. A ten war zone. It was a completely uncomfortable, paranoid night that seemed like it would never end. I finally managed to call Homer, who calmed me down so that I could sleep it off.

Back in New Orleans, January was a busy month, working on the fourth Venceremos Brigade. I interviewed and selected applicants—several Tulane students and a young Cajun man from Lafayette, a couple we worked with in Jackson, Mississippi, and a woman from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, as well as several Republic of New Afrika youth. The out-of-towners stayed with us for a week of orientation.

I wanted to make sure the volunteers were better prepared than those on the third brigade had been, and so a friend coached the recruits in basic Spanish. I sometimes sat in on the class. One morning during the class, we heard a dull thud in the hallway outside the office door. Raul opened the door and stopped, staring. I walked to the door and saw the object.

“Be careful, it may explode,” I said. The recruits sat as if hypnotized. I cut open the burlap bag with scissors, and black beans spilled out. There was a note inside. NEXT TIME, A BOMB! FIDELISTAS OUT OF NEW ORLEANS! OMEGA.

Homer and I met with Lou and Ed to tell them about the threat, and we informed them that we had decided to organize round-the-clock security. No one considered reporting the threat to the police. We all knew it was likely that the police themselves—their “Red Squad”—might be involved, although Omega was perfectly capable of carrying out the threat on their own. Dozens of people had been killed and injured by Omega’s bombs in New York, Philadelphia, and Miami. From then on, Homer, Sheila, Hannah, and I slept in sleeping bags on the office floor, alternating guard duty in the front room every four hours, day and night. During this time, our group was approached to help with a local issue. Lou and Ed and Robert met with us to tell us of an upcoming event in New Orleans.

“Word is that 20,000 kids will arrive for Mardi Gras next month and they’ll camp out in Audubon Park,” Robert said. The city park was a huge wilderness.

“Who says?” I asked.

“Police information. My contact there says the police are planning to provoke them, round them up, and drive them out of the city. They’re setting up a special holding camp out by the airport,” Lou said. “Apparently the word has gone out all over the country to communies in the Haight-Ashbury, Portland, Atlanta, all the places where the street kids and heads are, to gather in New Orleans for Mardi Gras, and the idea has reached the underground press. It’s sort of like the San Francisco Summer of Love in 1967,” Robert said.

“But the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce doesn’t want its main tourist attraction blemished,” Ed said.

“Those kids aren’t going to fight back. They’ll just leave if there’s trouble,” Sheila said.

“But there’s another problem. Word is that motorcycle gangs are com-

ing, too, including the Angels. You know what happened at Altamont last year? They'll probably do the job for the cops," Robert said. Near San Francisco at Altamont Pass, during a Rolling Stones concert, the Hell's Angels had attacked kids, raped women, and beaten a black man to death. "And they'll have help from the Klan and the gusanos," Lou said. "Gusano," the Spanish word for "worm," referred to the Cubans who had fled the revolution and lived in the United States.

"So what do you have in mind?" Homer asked.

"We need people to go into the crowds of kids and try to prevent trouble, to not allow anything to happen that would give the cops an opportunity to hit. I know it's short notice, but do you think you could train a few people in security and first aid?" Lou asked.

We went back upstairs to our office to discuss the idea. Sheila was excited about it and felt we could recruit some high school kids to our group. I thought we owed it to the local counterculture community for being supportive of our presence. Laura was always in favor of our focusing on local issues. Homer and Hannah agreed we should do it.

"You know what we need for this? A new name that reflects our present reality," Homer said. We all thought that we needed a revolutionary profile in order to gain credibility and to recruit young militants.

"I have an idea," Hannah said, and she ran out to her room. She returned holding a picture postcard.

"You remember this card you sent me from Billings, Montana, in 1969?"

"The Red-Armed Panther, the Native American warrior, I remember," I said.

"Wouldn't that be a great name?" Hannah said.

"The Red-Armed Panthers. I love it," Laura said.

"Let's put an ad in the *NOLA Express* under that name, announcing our classes," I said.

Thousands of hippies drifted into New Orleans in February as the early Mardi Gras Krewees began their parades. Churches, student organizations, the ACLU, and a dozen other groups had formed a coalition to

defend their right to be there and to provide services — soup kitchens, first aid, legal assistance. The city council finally succumbed to community pressure and lifted the ban on sleeping in Audubon Park, which bordered on Loyola and Tulane Universities at one end and the river on the other. Laura lived a few blocks from the park, so we set up our security headquarters there. Six doctors, six medical students, and five nurses had responded to our ad for medical volunteers in the *NOLA Express*. They trained us in first aid, including treatment of gunshot wounds. A week before Fat Tuesday, the official end of the festival, the police estimated that 10,000 hippies were in New Orleans, most of them in the park. The town fathers complained that paying visitors were canceling reservations.

Sheila, Homer, Hannah, and I formed a security squad and carried our Brownings in shoulder holsters under our jackets. We each carried two extra clips of ammunition. We practiced scenarios with each other, but none of the guerrilla warfare books we had were helpful since we were organizing defense, not surprise attacks. We modified Tae Kwan Do methods and we innovated. We divided the park into three parts and each patrolled a section, meeting at a redesignated spot every four hours. Each of us patrolled with a volunteer runner who could report to the other three on guard if one was in trouble. We also continued to take turns guarding our house while Homer drove the cab for eight-hour shifts.

We hadn't scheduled sleep, however, and we began to wear down after a few days. By then, the encampment of disorganized young people had developed into a community of sorts, and some people began their own security watches and formed clean-up crews. We ceased our patrols during daylight hours. Most of the campers were runaway teenagers, many from middle-class homes. The ones I talked to had only vague knowledge of the Vietnam War or the Black Panthers or Weatherman, or even who was president of the country. They were lost souls. I was skeptical about spending so much of our time and resources on protecting a tribe of mostly privileged white druggies, but walking through the clusters of young women and men, I wondered if their rebellion wasn't just as radical as our own. They had chosen to opt out of the "success" their fam-

ound held out to them, choosing, instead, a new, if personal freedom.

"A demagogue or an opportunistic guru could turn me into something ominous," Homer said. "It's something authentically nonviolent about them, I think. They seem so gentle and vulnerable," I said.

At the end of the street was littered to bed and I took up guard duty. The street was littered and beer cans from the parades. I thought of the kids in the hey'd chosen their fate just as we were choosing ours. But for the people of the world, war and strife were not a choice, but a never-ending imposition.

A pale blue New Orleans police car pulled up in front of the house, and two cops got out. I clutched the shotgun and snapped off the safety. I took my Browning from its holster, snapped the safety off, and laid it on the table. Another patrol car pulled up behind the first one. Two more cops got out. They talked and laughed. Two of them lit cigarettes. I woke Homer to take a look.

"We'd better wake everyone up," I said. We had worked out an evacuation plan in case of a police raid—we would run down the back way into the garden, out the garden gate, and down to the river to a meeting spot. "Wait. They're leaving, just stopped to take a piss, probably drunk," Homer said.

I wiped my sweating hands on my jeans. Months of surveillance were taking their toll on my sense of security. The openness and trust that had nourished me in Cuba were a distant memory.

In March, we began to speak in local high schools and colleges, and our Red-Armed Panther ad offering speakers had produced an avalanche of requests. For an ever-widening inner circle, we offered workshops in first aid, reloading shotgun shells, and weapons cleaning and breakdown.

On International Women's Day, March 8, I spoke in Susan O'Malley's English class at the University of New Orleans. The day was punctuated by a break-in at an FBI storage space in Media, Pennsylvania. An under-

ground women's commando stole classified documents that the FBI had compiled on activists. These documents were the first hard evidence about the FBI's COINTELPRO, a methodic government-sponsored campaign to destroy the antiwar, civil rights, and women's movements. The stolen documents confirmed that the FBI had orchestrated the murder of leaders, such as Fred Hampton, and "bad-jacketing," the term used by the FBI to indicate spreading false information about activists in order to create suspicions that they were government plants and agents.

That spring, I was teaching a Red-Armed Panthers' study group on Native Americans, using Dee Brown's new best-selling history of the U.S. wars against the Indians, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. The American Indian Movement's highly publicized eighteen-month occupation of Alcatraz had created great interest in Native Americans, especially among young people. Homer and I had tried to visit Alcatraz while in the Bay Area in the fall, but no visitors were being allowed on the island at the time. Instead we had attended the one-year anniversary of the occupation in Golden Gate Park, where a few thousand people were gathered, hundreds of them Native Americans. The drums and talking quieted when one of the Alcatraz leaders, LaNada Means, began reading a proclamation written by the occupiers.

To our brothers and sisters of all races and tongues upon our Earth Mother. We are still holding the Island of Alcatraz in the true names of freedom, justice and equality, because you, our brothers and sisters of this earth, have lent support to our just cause. We reach out our hands and hearts and send spirit messages to each and every one of you—We hold the rock. We have learned that violence breeds only more violence and we therefore have carried on our occupation of Alcatraz in a peaceful manner, hoping that the government of these United States will also act accordingly. We are Indians of all tribes. We hold the rock.

One day when I returned home, Homer told me about a visit from a merchant marine who was Native American and called himself "Mad Bear."

he said that Ché's reason for choosing Bolivia, the heart of Andes, for his last stand was to begin an indigenous revolution that would be the fatal blow to U.S. imperialism. It had never occurred to me that Ché had hoped to bring about an uprising of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. But now it made sense to me.

I gave Mad Bear copies of *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES* and presumed he would disagree with feminism. But he returned the next day to discuss my articles.

"What you write is true and important. It is rare to see such ideas. But they are abstract ideas." He told me about the traditional Iroquois way, how parents and all adults were expected to win the favor and respect of the children rather than asking the children to blindly obey them.

Mad Bear visited often to talk, and then he hired on to a banana boat to Ecuador and we never saw him again. We heard from him once more when he sent a package, postmarked Lima, Peru, containing ten copies of a new English-language tabloid, *Rainbow People*, about indigenous struggles all over the hemisphere. Mad Bear wrote of visiting Chile and meeting with the Mapuche Indians. He said they were enthusiastic supporters of the new president, Salvador Allende, and that the socialist government was legalizing the Mapuche land claims. Mad Bear urged us to work to lift the U.S. trade embargo against Chile. In the Peruvian Andes, he had visited Ayacucho and met with Quechua Indians who were organizing around the philosophy of the late José Carlos Mariátegui, the 1920s founder of the Peruvian Socialist Party. I had read his thesis in my Latin American History seminar—he believed that Latin American socialism should be based on the indigenous land struggles and incorporate the ancient Inca forms of communalism and land tenure. Mad Bear underlined a quote from Mariátegui's writings: *The indigenous reality will reveal the shining path to socialism.* How beautiful, I thought, the shining path. (This term was later hijacked by the Peruvian Maoist guerrilla organization *Sendero Luminoso*.)

It wasn't until three years later that I learned that Wallace "Mad Bear" Anderson was an important national Native American leader and had worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the 1968 Poor Peoples African-American resistance in the Americas. Pointing at the Ché poster,

The man said he'd been reading about me in the local papers and thought I might be Native American, especially because I was associated with a group called the Red-Armed Panthers and was from Oklahoma. I was certain he must be some kind of police agent and I dreaded his return. Mad Bear appeared at the door the next morning. Middle-aged, he was nearly as wide as he was tall. Everything about him was blocky—a square head with a square haircut, square neck, a massive square body, square arms. His huge, flat, square face bore scars that surely carried prizewinner arms. His kind of homemade vest that came to his knees, over stories. He wore a kind of rawhide and decorated with silver and blue jeans. The vest was made of rawhide and decorated with silver and porcupine quill embroidery. It was turquoise medallions and bead and bead and porcupine quill embroidery. It was secured in front with a huge bone clasp with an inlaid black onyx bear. I stared straight into his black eyes and he looked into mine. He raised his eyes to look above me, and I knew what he was looking at—a poster of Ché Guevara as a young guerrilla.

Mad Bear reached for his wallet and carefully removed a worn photograph in which there were three men, arm in arm. The one in the middle was unmistakably a younger version of the man who stood before me now, wearing the same vest. I squinted and raised the photograph closer to my eyes, and there was the young, bearded Fidel Castro on one side and long-haired Ché Guevara on the other.

"Supplies to the mountains," he said, and I knew exactly what he meant—that he had smuggled supplies from ships to the Cuban revolutionaries back in the late fifties. Mad Bear had said the magic words. "Come in," I said.

Mad Bear sat on the daybed in our small entry room. Horner, Sheila, Hannah, and I pulled up chairs and sat facing him. He advised us to join with the Native resistance, with the "red people of the Western Hemisphere." He believed that was the only way to reverse the catastrophic course of history, the only way to bring true indigenous socialism. He told us about the Hopi prophecy and the "fourth world." He hailed Fidel and Ché as the vanguard of renewed Native American and

African-American resistance in the Americas. Pointing at the Ché poster,

Campaign. Although our paths never crossed again, he continued his mission unifying indigenous peoples of the Americas until his death in 1985, and had a great deal to do with my taking up that work in the mid-1970s.

The FBI took notice of our direction in April when we took the first step toward setting up safe houses by acquiring driver's licenses under false names, which we would then use to rent apartments and buy cars.

*FBI. 7/15/71. Roxanne Durbar. In April, 1971, subject formed the New Orleans Urban Guerrilla Group [an FBI fabricated name], a small hard-core paramilitary organization dedicated to conducting guerrilla-type warfare with ultimate overthrow of the United States Government. She has purchased firearms and has participated in firearms training.*

Homer learned from other cab drivers that many people from Orleans Parish went over to St. Bernard Parish to obtain driver's licenses, because they required only an application and a fee but no proof of identity. That is how we were introduced to that isolated segment of the lower Gulf. St. Bernard Parish and Plaquemines Parish comprised one of the hubs of oil production and refining in southern Louisiana. These two adjoining parishes controlled the oldest Louisiana offshore oil pool, and they formed a medieval-like empire under the oil-rich Perez family, who were "Isleños," a community dating back to 1778, when their ancestors were sent from the Canary Islands by Spanish King Carlos III. Napoleon seized the Louisiana Territory in 1800, and then sold it to the United States in 1803. Around two-thirds of the 90,000 citizens of the two parishes were Isleños, their mother tongue a hybrid of Spanish and French. The other locals, mostly Cajun fishermen, were all in one way or another dependent on the Perez family. There were rumors of drugs and arms smuggling.

The infamous judge Leander Perez was the patriarch of Plaquemines Parish, and his son was the St. Bernard Parish district attorney. They ran a dungeonlike prison. The oil workers had to be out of Plaquemines by

dark, and they were not allowed to live in that parish. They could live in St. Bernard, but were closely controlled. When the civil rights workers had come to southern Louisiana to register voters in 1964, Perez threatened to throw them all in the dungeon if they showed up in his territory. They stayed away, and blacks still were not welcome there. The parish seat of St. Bernard constituted no more than a few fishing supplies stores and the courthouse. The quaint, two-story brick civic building housed all the public offices of the parish. A wide, winding wooden staircase led to the driver's license bureau. We filled out simple applications and we were each asked if we swore we'd told the truth. We each lied when the applications asked if we'd ever had a license in another name or in another state. Within twenty minutes, the colored Polaroid pictures were laminated onto the licenses and we all had our new photo IDs.

Preparing safe houses was expensive. To support it, I accepted every invitation to lecture while we were making our preparations. I didn't ask Abby for money anymore, nor did we communicate. Most of my invitations to speak were in the South—Gainesville and Tallahassee, Emory University in Atlanta, Ole Miss and the University of Alabama, the Louisiana State Universities at Baton Rouge, Shreveport, and Lafayette. I brought in \$2,000 a month in speaking fees that spring, talking about women's liberation, capitalist exploitation, racism, the Vietnam War and other national liberation movements, and the necessity for revolution.

In May, we rented four apartments under each of our aliases in large complexes, strategically chosen in different parts of greater New Orleans. Our neighbors at the apartments were mostly white, transient workers. The apartments were carpeted, fully furnished, and had dishwashers and air-conditioning. We purchased battery-operated radios and flashlights, and Hannah bought a load of used pots and pans, dishes, glasses, and tableware to stock each apartment. She also found a variety of wigs and disguises in the French Quarter theater shops. Homer bought four used cars from different lots, and we registered them in our aliases. Mine was a ten-year-old cream-colored Mercury with a red interior; the others were Plymouth Valiants.

We chose apartments with walk-in closets and installed heavy-duty locks so that they functioned as secure storage space for the guns and documents. The trickiest part of the operation was transferring the weapons from Jackson Street to each of the apartments. Our house in the Irish Channel was being watched closely, and unmarked cars that were easy to spot followed us. We'd kept a careful record of the surveillance on the street. Eluding the police as we left the neighborhood was always a painstaking ordeal, but once we were lost in the city, the rest was simple. Homer managed to transfer the weapons in his taxi.

On a trip to Chicago for a conference, Homer, Sheila, and I met a charismatic white working-class man who headed a neighborhood group. They had strong links with workers in the large steel mills and informed us that the fuel that supplied the mills traveled through a pipeline directly from southern Louisiana. We began discussing sabotage of the southern Louisiana oil and agribusiness industries. The idea was that when the steel-workers went out on strike we could sabotage the pipeline to cripple the mills' operations. Our Chicago friends had also informed us of the huge quantities of grain that were transported on barges down the Mississippi to the New Orleans docks to be shipped all over the world. The mostly black dockworkers in New Orleans handled the grain, transferring it from barges to merchant ships. There was a strong Longshoremen union as well as the Merchant Marines that might support us eventually, or if they went out on strike, we could support them through sabotage—sabotage was not uncommon during labor conflicts in southern Louisiana.

On return to New Orleans, gradually and imperceptibly, we ceased regarding what we were doing merely as a way of protecting political fugitives, but rather as preparation for our own project.

Now it was crucial that we become better acquainted with the workers of St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes. We rented an isolated farmhouse near Chalmette in St. Bernard Parish for Hannah, who was hired as a waitress at a popular diner only a mile from the house, enabling her to learn a great deal about the area and to meet workers and local peo-

ple. The majority of the workers who were building the new oil refineries were white Texans. They were carpenters, crane operators, and iron-workers who had worked in the North Sea and North African oil fields, in Southeast Asia, or anywhere Houston-based Brown and Root had oil or military contracts. Thanks to Lyndon Johnson and the Vietnam War, Brown and Root had made a fortune off military contracts in South Vietnam, surpassing San Francisco-based Bechtel Corporation as the largest industrial building contractor in the world.

Brown and Root was a nonunion shop, with no benefits. Many of their laborers were convicts on work parole. Brown and Root recruited them out of the Texas state prison in Huntsville, paying half union scale. It was dangerous work, and there were numerous stories of various old boys who had been crushed or who fell or got swept away while building drilling platforms offshore. The workers lived in crowded trailer parks and if they had families, their children had to change schools with every move. The local Cajuns resented the Texas workers, who called the locals "coon-asses" and "swamp-niggers." Brown and Root didn't hire Cajuns (or blacks) except for an occasional truck driver or as temporary unskilled laborer. Yet they were poisoning the local fishing and shrimp grounds with oil, mercury, and lead, forcing the self-employed fishermen and shrimpers farther out to sea and out of business because they could not compete with the large operators who had refrigeration and could stay out for weeks.

We began to consider a union-organizing project, although clearly it would be difficult and dangerous. There were ample stories of workers committing sabotage, but no record of anyone trying to organize the migrant workers. These were modern-day cowboys, who regarded themselves as rugged individualists and daredevils, and this self-image preempted the idea of unionizing.

One Saturday night we went to a dance hall on the St. Bernard Highway, popular with the oil and construction workers. Homer was nervous about being the only man with three women in that setting. When we arrived, two men were pummeling each other in the parking

lot. A black-haired woman dressed in fancy Western clothes and cowboy boots leaned against a pickup, watching them with a look of disgust on her face. The dance hall was smoky, crowded, and noisy. The jukebox was blaring "American Pie" ("drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry . . .") and it sounded like the song was written right there where we were, across the highway from the Mississippi River levee.

Most of the men and women wore Western garb, but some dressed simply in loose shirts and jeans like us, so we didn't stand out. Beer brands appeared to indicate loyalties—whole tables of noisy men in cowboy hats clutched bottles of Lone Star, a terrible Texas brew. Other tables were filled with couples drinking JAX, the product of the Jackson Brewery in New Orleans. Still others, who must have come on the motorcycles parked outside, drank Bud. We ordered Bud—somehow it seemed more neutral. Hannah said the fights there were usually between Cajuns and Texans, and began after a Texan would ridicule Louisiana or insult a Cajun woman.

Homer and Sheila danced to Creedence Clearwater's "Proud Mary." A man Hannah knew from the diner asked her to dance. I sat alone at the table, watching. Then a man stood in front of my table smiling down at me as if he knew me from somewhere. I felt I knew him, too, but it was because he looked exactly like Marlon Brando, the blond Brando playing Riommele the Desert Fox. At first glance he appeared as though he could have been a football fullback—he was about five foot ten and stocky, with a muscular neck, arms, and shoulders. But on closer look, I saw the build of a workingman—my father's build, Mad Bear's build: a human forklift with the beginning of a potbelly. A wave of warmth and familiarity washed over me. His hand was outstretched, asking me to dance. It was love at first sight.

"I don't dance," I said.

"What are you doing in this joint if you don't dance? Are you a missionary?" It was a good question. He was a Texan all right, but he didn't wear a cowboy hat or boots; rather, faded jeans and a white shirt with the sleeves cut off at the shoulders, the long shirttail hanging out. His huge

biceps were tattooed—from his time in the navy, he would tell me. He wore work boots.

I followed him to the dance floor. He folded me in his arms. He smelled like the men from my childhood—salt and Old Spice.

"My name's Buddy. You'll have to excuse my attire. I just got off work."

"I'm Roxanne."

"Roxanne, like in that movie about the man with a long nose? I never met anyone by that name."

"You work for Brown and Root?" I asked.

"Wouldn't work for nobody else. Been with them ten years, all over the world. I operate a crane. You like crayfish?"

"I won't eat them," I said.

"I won't hold that against you. Would you ride with me to get some crayfish? Don't worry, 'cause I don't have no ulterior motives, just lone-some and hungry."

"Okay, I'll tell my friends I'm leaving."

Homer and Hannah were dancing, and Sheila sat at the table alone. I told her I was leaving and to go on without me.

"You sure you'll be safe?"

"Got my .32." I had a Beretta short-barreled .32 in a holster under my arm. I wore a long-sleeved shirt to cover it. I followed Buddy to a white Ford Econoline van with Texas license plates.

"This here's all I got in the world, and it ain't paid for."

"You don't own a home back in Texas?"

"Nope, and my wife left me last week, run off with all the money, just like the words to a country song."

"You have kids?" I asked.

"One girl, just turned nine, Rebecca. She's the apple of my eye. How about you?"

"Daughter, almost nine. She's with her father. We're divorced."

"Well, we can cry on each other's shoulders."

Down the highway a few miles, Buddy stopped in front of a dimly lit

shack and went inside. He returned with a big paper bag in his arm and a six-pack of Budweiser tall boys. He dumped the load on the engine cover between us and pulled a boiled crayfish out of the bag. The wondrous smell of garlic filled the van. He threw the crayfish carcasses out the window after he sucked out the flesh. He also threw the beer cans out as he emptied them.

"Is it legal to drink while you drive in Louisiana?" I really didn't know and felt nervous about being stopped.

"Everything's legal, or nothing's illegal in Louisiana, except in Plaquemines Parish where it's illegal to exist if you're from Texas. You know a lot of the ol' boys from home don't like Louisiana, but I do. They call me an honorary coon-ass. I like the Cajuns and I go fishing with them. I eat crayfish and gumbo. I like their fiddles and accordions, everything about the place, even this wet heat. My wife, she couldn't stand it here, says it's backward. But then, she was raised up in Houston. Me, I'm from the east Texas backwoods—ain't so different from down here. Where was you raised up?"

"Western Oklahoma. Most of my dad's family lives in the Rio Grande Valley and San Antonio. But I was born in San Antonio."

"San Antonio rose. I would've took you for a big city gal, from California maybe."

"Where are we going?" Buddy had driven east on the highway, and we were deep into St. Bernard Parish. The road was dark with no traffic. "Thought I'd show you where I work." He stopped on the highway. The skeleton of structural steel was lit with spotlights and men were working.

"They work at midnight on Saturday night?"

"Round the clock every day. I worked fourteen hours today, but when I started to get sleepy, I stopped. Gotta be on your toes every minute in a crane. Them boogers can tip over real easy and that's all she wrote, or you can swing a load of metal wrong and cream an ironworker reaching for it. That's my crane over there."

"Do you know how to use dynamite and nitroglycerine?" I asked.

"Hell yes," he said.

Buddy drove me to the Jackson Avenue house and dropped me off at 4 A.M. I saw Homer doing guard duty in the second-floor window, and I jumped out of the van quickly so he could see that it was me.

"Thanks for the ride," I said.  
"You got a phone number?" Buddy asked.  
"I'm moving this weekend, but I know where to find you."

"Come by the job anytime," he said. And the white van lumbered off into the hot misty night.

In the weeks that followed, I found myself thinking of Buddy, having mental conversations with him, laughing at his humor and his familiarity, his smell and smile. It crossed my mind that we might recruit him to our project, but I realized that he probably would be moving on to another job, or back to his wife.

*FBI. 8/11/71. Roxanne Dunbar. Subject's current residence and employment are unknown. She moved from former residence, 1024 Jackson Avenue, New Orleans, La., during first week of June, 1971.*

Over Memorial Day, Homer, Sheila, and I disappeared. Homer quit his cab job saying he was going to Mexico. We each called family members and friends with the same story. We hoped to divert the FBI so that their Mexican contacts would look for us there, or for them to believe we'd gone to Cuba. I sold the VW station wagon for cash with mixed feelings, because Abby had bought it. We turned the flat with all the office equipment over to a local women's liberation group who thought we were leaving the area. Laura and the other women from our group would continue the women's organizing and hint that we'd gone to Cuba. Hannah stayed in St. Bernard Parish under her own name but, like Laura, had access to all the safe houses, where they would meet us regularly.

We bleached Homer's straight, dark hair and gave him a permanent, and with the addition of some horn-rimmed glasses, he looked remarkably different. Because he would be seeking employment as an oil field

roustabout, he would continue to wear jeans, but now with a snap-button Western shirt and scuffed cowboy boots and a hat. We cut the sleeves out of a jean jacket for him to wear over his shoulder holster. Sheila also became a bleached blonde. She wore tight-fitting slacks with a matching top and gold sandals, and carried a purse large enough for her Browning. She looked older and brassy, quite unlike her sweet and modest self.

I knew my hair would not hold a curl, not even a wave, so we died it black. I parted it on the side and pinned back the bangs. With makeup and aluminum framed glasses I looked different enough. I wore Western clothes and cowboy boots and carried a shoulder bag for my Browning. Our first month underground during June 1971 was one of the hottest months on record in southern Louisiana. The temperature was over 100 degrees with 100 percent humidity every day. Night brought no relief, and though the rain came often, it was hard to distinguish from the humidity.

Keeping our scattered weapons from rusting became a full-time job. The apartments were air-conditioned, but we had stashed the weapons and documents in locked closets where there were no air ducts. The closets became steam baths in the heat and humidity, and so we had to air the weapons and clean them daily. We feared leaving them out in the apartment lest a nosy manager or utilities worker discover them when we were not there.

While Homer waited to be hired as a roustabout, Sheila took a job in a rest home in St. Bernard Parish. We decided that I shouldn't take a job because I was too well known and easy to identify, so I made the rounds checking on the apartments and cleaning the guns. I also kept the apartments supplied with food. We were in for the long haul, figuring it would take years for us to merge ourselves with the industrial workers while carrying out sabotage on the pipelines and barges without being detected. So the tedious tasks that summer resonated with a larger meaning and didn't seem futile at all.

The best moments were when all of us gathered once a week at the Algiers apartment. Laura would arrive wearing a blonde wig that made her look like a man dressed up as a woman. She brought our mail, told

us all the news, and made us laugh with her stories. One day, though, Laura brought news that changed the course of events.

"Roxanne, a man named Buddy has been to the Jackson Avenue house looking for you every evening. He says it's shrimp season and he wants to take you out shrimping with him," she told me.

"That's the guy I met three weeks ago, just before we went underground. When did he start coming by?" I asked.

"Right after I was last here. What do I tell him? I didn't want to say you'd gone to Cuba without asking. I said you were on vacation."

"I think I should tell him some of what we're up to," I told the group. "He could be useful to us—he knows the place, and even gets along with the Cajuns. He's experienced with explosives. We have to take some risks with people or we'll never get anywhere. Might as well start with him." After a short discussion, everyone agreed that I should go and see Buddy and confide in him.

My heart sped as I drove to the construction site Buddy had shown me. It was 10 A.M., a time it seemed he'd most likely be on the job. *Brown and Root, Houston, Texas*, was written on the side of a small trailer at the edge of the site. I knocked on the door and realized I didn't even know Buddy's name. A middle-aged cowboy opened the door and a waft of cold air hit me in the face. He said that Buddy had worked all night and had gone to his trailer to sleep—he gave me exact directions.

I drove north on the St. Bernard Highway and found the trailer park with Buddy's white van parked in front. I knocked on the flimsy aluminum door, making more of a rattle than a knock. The door opened. Buddy was buttoning the top metal button on his Levis. He was barefoot and shirtless.

"Yeah, whatcha want?" He squinted in the light.

"Hi, Buddy. Sorry to wake you."

"Who are you anyway?" he asked.

"Roxanne. You remember me? Your boss said you'd gone home."

"San Antonio rose? I'll be damned, but you've changed. I didn't hardly recognize you."

"Yes I've changed. I won't bother you now, just wanted to make con-

tact so we can meet later. I don't live on Jackson Avenue anymore but the people there said you'd been around looking for me."

"Climb up and share a beer. I don't have no crawdaddies on hand for you." He winked and laughed, and I laughed with him.

I stepped up into the tiny kitchen. "Watch out, or you'll bump your head. You can see why my wife left me." I sat down at the built-in dining nook. Buddy popped two cans of Bud and sat down facing me.

"I wanted to invite you out shrimpiping. It's the season and I've been taking out a shrimp boat an old boy has for sale. Come out with me today." "Do you always take women shrimpiping on the first date?" "It'll be our second date, only on the second date."

"I need to tell you something." I felt absurd. How could I tell this stranger that I was an underground revolutionary?

"Well, first I've changed my name and appearance. If we're to see each other you have to call me by a different name, Lily, and not tell anyone my real name."

"Lily's a good name, my mama's favorite flower."

"I'm a member of an armed underground group. We're revolutionaries." I took the Browning out of my purse and placed it on the table.

"Whooee! A regular pistol-packing mama you be. You rob banks like Bonnie Parker?"

"Not yet. Right now we're planning to blow up some industrial installations."

"Great, more work for me to rebuild them. How about blowing up that new refinery we're putting up? The hours we're working, it'll be finished in two months and I'll have to move on."

"You don't disapprove?"

"Hell no. I got a brother-in-law in Huntsville for armed robbery. Come from a long line of jailbirds, mama says we're related to John Wesley Harding. Me, I never been locked up for nothing more than drunk driving, but I been beat to a pulp by cops more than once. I ain't got no love for the law."

"What about the political part? We're revolutionaries, and we want to

overthrow the capitalist system. We like red China and Cuba and we support the communists against the Americans in Vietnam. And we oppose racism and believe in women's liberation."

"You got my vote. I'm not as dumb as I sound. I know about them things and think about them. No way, I'd go to no war to make the Rockefellers richer. Mexicans, Negroes, Cajuns, rednecks, we're all plain working folk."

I didn't know if he was telling the truth or just saying what he thought I wanted to hear. But it was enough to convince me that there was a rational basis for my attraction to him. We made love and I drove home like a teenager in love for the first time.

Two days later, Buddy and I moved in together to a larger trailer in another trailer park, not far from the construction site. Our group decided we would allow him to know about only one of the safe houses. While he worked, I made my usual rounds checking on the weapons and meeting with the others. At the same time, Homer was hired as a roustabout. He worked west of Baton Rouge near the interstate pipeline and came into New Orleans to meet with us every week.

During this time, we decided to establish contact with the underground newspaper, *NOLA Express*. I contacted one of the people we had worked with on the Mardi Gras project, who in turn put me in touch with Darlene Fife, who described our meeting—she calls me Rita—while I was underground in her memoir, *Portraits from Memory: New Orleans in the Sixties*:

I was picked up on a Quarter street, and Higson was in the back seat disguised in suit and tie. The car was driven by someone I didn't know. We changed cars at least once and finally arrived in the New Orleans suburb of Gretna. We parked a few doors down from a house, which the driver told us to enter. He left. Higson and I sat at the kitchen table for a few minutes and a woman walked in. She set her wig on the table and I recognized Rita. There was no sense of fearful intrigue. This was obviously great fun for her.

She said she wanted us to know what they were up to so that when a planned action took place we could help publicize the reasons for it, which they knew the daily New Orleans newspapers would never do. The plan was to destroy oil pipelines. Rita was also concerned about possible wounding by the police and asked us to find a discrete doctor. We left in the same method as we arrived.

I phoned a young doctor who wrote a column for us. When he came over I gave him no details, only said that there was a possibility of injuries to people who would not want to go to a hospital. Could I call him if the need arose? He blanched, gulped and said yes. I never again heard from Rita or any of her group.

It was Laura's idea for me to build an identity as a shrimper, to be accepted—and protected—by the local Cajuns. I bought a shrimp boat and trawl for \$500 under my alias. Buddy was overjoyed to be my partner: "I got the time, honey, if you got the money." We shrimped on Sundays, and some of the days after he had worked all night. Buddy was well liked by his Cajun friends, who visited the trailer and went out shrimping with us. The conjunction of my need for an identity and Buddy's dream of being a shrimper was working well. Our group viewed the shrimp boat as a good cover and an eventual means for transporting weapons and explosives. I charted the barges coming downriver from the heartland, laden with wheat, corn, and soy, for export.

I savored my newfound anonymity. The banality of this new life was almost exotic for me after three years of living in the spotlight. Living with an ordinary workingman who spoke the language of my childhood made me feel more real than I had in years, ever since I left home. Yet it was a terrible illusion, self-deception on a grand scale. I was caught in a bundle of contradictions that would take me years to unravel, but I didn't realize it at the time. And for the first time in my life, I began to abuse alcohol and show all the signs of my inherited alcoholism. Worse, the relationship quickly morphed from benign-traditional—already a betrayal of my women's liberation ideals—to abusive.

On July 4, I stumbled out of bed at 6 A.M. to cook breakfast and fix Buddy's lunch as usual. When I finished, I woke him.

"What the hell, woman? I ain't going to work on no holiday. It's the damned Fourth of July. Even Brown and Root's closed down today. We're going shrimping with the Verots," Buddy bellowed.

"I didn't know you were off for the Fourth. I'm supposed to meet the others this morning." Actually, I hadn't even remembered that July 4 was a holiday.

"Well, you ain't going. We have plans."

"You didn't tell me."

"How dumb can you be not to know it's a holiday? I'm telling you now." Anger made my skin burn. Buddy had never spoken that way to me, although he was often jealous when I spoke to men or was alone with Homer.

"I have to go there and at least tell them. We call each other only in emergencies," I said.

Buddy swung his legs to the floor, pulled on his jeans, and stood up. His mouth twisted in a snarl and his hands clenched into fists.

"You're gonna do what I say. You're my woman. I'm sick and tired of you and your little gang. From now on, I call the shots."

"What's gotten into you? Why are you talking this way?"

The blow came so swiftly and unexpectedly that I thought I'd been struck by a natural force. My face was pressed flat against the prickly green carpet. I instinctively rolled into a fetal position, just in time. He kicked me hard, aiming for my stomach.

"You got it straight now? Get dressed. We're supposed to meet them at the boat in ten minutes."

I put makeup on the bruise—a black eye—and wore sunglasses. We didn't speak as we drove down the highway. I suppressed the fury churning inside me by telling myself that I was underground, that I could not behave as I would normally. Buddy stopped for a case of beer and a sack of ice. The Verots, a Cajun couple, were loading the boat with bags of groceries to make our lunch.

"You best be friendly, hear. They already think you're stuck up. You be nice to my friends, you hear?" Buddy said before we got out of the van. I didn't answer him.

After eight seemingly endless hours on the boat, we docked and unloaded. The woman, Fran, was shy and quiet, and I couldn't think of anything to say to her. By the time we reached shore the two men were tottering drunk. Buddy invited the Verots over for a shrimp boil. At the trailer, I was relieved to have work to do, preparing the shrimp with Fran. The men sprawled in front of the TV watching a baseball game.

"Ain't it great to have slaves to do the cooking?" Buddy said.

Verot laughed, "Hell yes, beats a nigger any day."

Buddy rolled over on the floor laughing, "Sure thing. Can't fuck no nigger." I ran to the bathroom and locked the flimsy door. When I came out the Verots were gone and Buddy was passed out on the floor.

The next morning I left five minutes after Buddy did, and drove to the apartment where we'd been supposed to meet. Sheila was there alone. "What happened to you? I came to the trailer looking for you and your car was there. Are you all right? What happened to your eye?"

The words stuck in my throat. I was too ashamed to tell Sheila what had happened, and I'd already convinced the group of Buddy's importance to our work.

"I slipped and fell on the boat. Yesterday was a big mix-up. Buddy had planned to shrimp with another couple and I couldn't get out of it." I was covering up for him and putting my own safety at risk, behaving like a battered woman who had never heard of women's liberation.

"Homer's going to call tonight to see if you're all right. Did you hear that Jim Morrison died of a drug overdose in Paris?" I hadn't heard.

That evening, Buddy came home from work apologetic and wanted to take me dancing. "That was dumb of me. I'm sorry I hit you. I just get so damned jealous of you being with your friends all the time."

"Just don't ever do it again or I'll leave you," I said.

"I won't do it no more, but don't go threatening me. If anyone does any leaving around here it'll be me."

And he did leave, two weeks later. Buddy left without a word, not even a note. When I found the trailer empty, I called Verot, who told me Buddy had gone back to his wife in Houston, that she had been around looking for him, threatening divorce. Homer and I went over to the trailer to retrieve my belongings and turn the key over to the manager.

During the time before he left, Buddy didn't hit me again, but I became obsessed with maintaining the relationship as if the future of the group depended on it. To please Buddy I slackened on my duties in the group, and became short-tempered, arbitrary with them. I even slapped Sheila once. In response, they became increasingly obedient to my every whim, and that continued even when Buddy was gone. It was a scary experience seeing the pattern develop and feeling helpless to stop it. I was an emotional wreck and drinking to numb my fears and doubts.

Rather than stopping everything and rethinking the trajectory we were on, we decided to clean up the mess and carry on. I would go to California for a while, during which time the others would close down any sites Buddy knew about and change their identities. I wanted to publish a new issue of *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES*, and establish contact with trusted allies. I donned a blonde wig and flew to San Francisco. I took \$1,000 in cash, most of which I planned to spend having the journal printed.

From the San Francisco airport, I rode the Airporter bus downtown and walked up the hill to the YWCA on Sutter. I slept, strangely exhausted as if I had been on a very long journey and suffered jet lag. I woke refreshed and traced old steps through the fog-shrouded streets, up Nob Hill, over to Russian Hill, past the apartment where Jimmy and I had lived when we first moved from Oklahoma, then down to North Beach.

All roads in North Beach still led to City Lights Bookstore. I picked up a new book and took it downstairs to look at, a slender novel by the poet Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*, published nine years after her suicide. I felt sorry about her death, that she had not lived long enough to know about women's liberation, which might have saved her life. I sat down at a table by the wall and read the first line of the book and was hooked: "It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs . . ."

I finished the book and walked back up the familiar creaky, wooden stairs, reading the posters and flyers tacked to the walls of the stairwell. I stopped at one that announced a memorial for photographer Diane Arbus, who had recently committed suicide. Diane Arbus, the person I held responsible for my celebrity, had been her own assassin. Now I wished I had known her.

I transformed the YWCA room into a workspace with a rented IBM Selectric and layout supplies. My plan was to create a special issue of *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES*—making clear that it was my personal production and not that of Cell 16—combining the five articles I'd published in the first three issues with a new essay entitled “No More Fun and Games.”

I'd been writing it in my mind for two months, and now it unfolded like a pure stream of thought. I wrote about how I came to women's liberation from a consciousness transferred to me through Audrey's tragic death, and then to a broader stance, carrying with me the strength of women's liberation. I ignored the recent past with Buddy and how I had fallen into prefeminist patterns of behavior.

I am a revolutionary. I am a feminist. I don't know if I am a revolutionary feminist or a feminist revolutionary. I think I am a female revolutionary and a feminist. It is arbitrary whether I say first I am a revolutionary or first I am a feminist. The fact is that I am a woman, greatly limited by that fact and the consciousness of my position as woman, committed to the liberation of all women. There is no possibility for me to be liberated except that all women be liberated, and that means power and control on a political-economic level, not some personal, individual freedom from restrictions, or personal fame. Having had nothing, I will not settle for crumbs. The totality of women's historical oppression must be understood, and we must implement our knowledge, restructuring society according to that perspective.

I am, inseparable from being a woman, a human being who has

suffered extreme physical and cultural deprivation due to my class position. I am committed to the liberation of people from political-economic subjugation and its side effects—extremes of wealth and poverty; power and powerlessness; disease; ignorance; terror; weakness; racism, etc. But even had I never personally suffered from my class position I could not imagine struggling for female power out of context of the struggles of all oppressed peoples. I will not be free, women will not be free, until all humanity is free. We women should be in the front of the struggle . . . what we need is not self-defense, but military strategy. We need to develop a military offensive.

The most powerful force among white young people on the left has been the underground movement of Weatherman. Hopefully, the cadres of Weatherman are not giving up their basic position as a revolutionary military grouping, but are developing even more effectively, and most of all are developing military strategy, not just doing actions.

If some overall principles are developed in our movement, we will not pine for a large centralized organization to begin armed struggle. Such an organization is a fantasy as well as impractical and insecure to the extent it can exist . . .

Some might ask if armed struggle is not a “male thing.” If that is so, what is the female alternative to taking power? There are not many ways to take power and gain liberation. In every revolutionary struggle women have been the strength and even the base; the problem has been the suppression of female consciousness and female leadership. We must see to it that the same does not happen here, for more than any place in the world male domination in the North American struggle would be catastrophic.

The degree to which we see to it that we women are participating and developing the revolutionary struggle is the degree to which the female perspective will be dominant in our struggle and in the future society. We must not withdraw from the struggle, now that we have gotten to the point of actually raising female con-

siousness. Let us not stop though we may be tired and discouraged and confused. Let us build an army of women who will be so strong, so humane that no one will have to ever "give" us power, and we will not have to "demand" equal rights.

Just before I took the layout to the printer, I added a two-page speech by Clyde Warrior, a young Ponca Native American from Oklahoma, a "Red Power" leader who died in 1967. Warrior ended his speech saying:

Democracy is not just good in the abstract, it is necessary for the human condition; and the epitome of democracy is responsibility as individuals and as communities of people. There cannot be responsibility unless people can make decisions and stand by them or fall by them.

Warrior's words spoke to me. I realized then that my revolutionary project had to stand or fall on my decisions and that I would be responsible for the consequences. I felt prepared for the challenge.

I took the journal to the printer and, during the week it took for it to print, I looked for our contact and discovered that he could not remember having made the agreement with us about sending Black Panthers to New Orleans.

Homer had asked me to get in touch with Tom Hayden who after being kicked out of the Red Family commune in Berkeley had split with Anne and moved to Venice Beach. I took the bus to Los Angeles.

Even at the beach, the air in L.A. was stale and hot. It was fire season, and the hot Santa Ana wind was blowing. Venice Beach swarmed with people, mostly white and mostly young, but with a fair sprinkling of young blacks and Chicanos. Not many people risked bringing small children to Venice Beach, but the large, mangy dogs possibly outnumbered humans. Everyone wore as little as possible and a few people were naked. Tattoos adorned most of the bodies. Skateboards, surfboards, and bicycles jutted and thrust through the crowds, more like weapons than instru-

ments for pleasure. On the wide boardwalk lined with curio shops, eating joints, and apartment houses, wild-eyed teenaged boys skateboarded. Bicycles whizzed past, causing my scalp to itch with fear of sudden death. It seemed possible that I was the only person in that mob who was neither drugged nor drunk. Police helicopters thumped overhead.

I found the café where Tom had said to meet him. He sat at a window table writing, apparently anonymous and oblivious to the Venice Beach crowd. His dark hair hung to his bronzed shoulders, and he wore a headband. Like most of the other men, he was shirtless and barefoot. Apparently, the sign on the door—"No shirt, no shoes, no service"—was redundant. I sat down at the small table and Tom looked up at me blankly. I had to remind him who I was. My hair was still died black and had grown long.

"Roxanne. I didn't recognize you. You look like an American Indian," he said.

"So do you," I said. He smiled.

"I wish I were. I'm writing a book on Vietnam and started reading about the U.S. wars against the Indians. It's amazing how Vietnam is like a reenactment of the Indian wars."

"I remember reading back in 1968 that U.S. Special Forces units operating covertly inside Cambodia were code-named Daniel Boone," I said. "Listen, you mind if we talk while I change my tire?" Tom packed his notebook in a canvas shoulder bag. I followed him into the hot street. He stopped beside a battered VW bug that had a flat tire.

"Practically every night my tires are slashed and every morning I change them," he said. He hauled a used tire out of the backseat and jacked up the car.

"Vandals?" I asked.

"Harassment. The feds or local police. They want to make me paranoid, force me underground or into exile, but they won't succeed." He finished the work and looked satisfied.

"It seems like you're dropping out. You know your leadership is still needed. No one knows more about the Vietnam War than you," I said.

"I'm writing a book. That's all I can do right now. The movement is cannibalizing leaders. It's like a fierce storm passing over. You just have to lay low and wait it out. And not apologize for anything. Never apologize." I breathed a sigh of relief that of the three choices—sell out, drop out, or go underground—our group had chosen the underground.

I walked to the Venice post office to buy stamps, and my eye caught the FBI Most Wanted poster. Bernadine Dohrn's picture was at the top, followed by other political fugitives, including several other women—Susan Saxe, Katherine Anne Power, Cathy Wilkinson, and Kathy Boudin. The face of a young blond man was familiar—he had been one of my students at Suffolk University in Boston. Now he was wanted for shipping weapons to the Irish Republican Army. There was an FBI list of "terrorist" groups: Weatherman; the New Year's Gang in Madison; the Smiling Fox Tribe in New York; the Quartermoon Tribe in Seattle; and Boston's Proud Eagle Tribe. The FBI also listed the John Brown Revolutionary League in Houston, the Motherfuckers, the White Panthers, and the Black Panthers, but there was no mention of any group in Louisiana. I felt invisible and invincible.

When I returned to the Bay Area, I stayed in a movement house in Berkeley. I was there alone on August 7, 1971, preparing the journal for mailing while I listened to a special report on Pacifica Radio, detailing the mysterious, suspicious murder of George Jackson by San Quentin guards that morning. Six other men, three prisoners and three guards, were also killed in what the authorities called an "escape attempt" by Jackson. They claimed that Jackson's lawyer, Stephen Bingham, had slipped him a pistol and that Jackson hid the loaded weapon in his Afro. After the shooting, Bingham had disappeared.

I walked to the picture window and looked out over the bay in the direction of San Quentin, only ten miles away. I felt numb and chilled despite the morning sun. My eyes fell to the street below. On that narrow residential street was a black-and-white California Highway Patrol car with two khaki-uniformed officers inside. Behind it was a pale blue Ford Fairlane with two men in dark suits, distinctively FBI. They all

peered up at the window at me, and they obviously wanted me to see them. I crouched down out of sight below the window.

After a while I heard car engines, and when I looked out to the street again, the cars were gone. I went out to mail the journals, and I called New Orleans on a pay phone using our code. Sheila called back. She had heard about George Jackson. I asked her to talk over with the others the possibility of her driving out to San Francisco so that we could travel together to visit some women's communes, show them the new journal, and perhaps talk to them about setting up safe houses.

Sheila arrived three days later and we drove first to Lake Tahoe to visit Jan, my oldest brother's ex-wife, who had taken their five children and left him a dozen years before.

Jan ran out the door to greet us, followed by a dark-haired boy, two pretty teenaged girls and a teenaged boy, my nieces and nephews. I hadn't seen Jan or the children since 1960, when she left my brother. She looked older than her thirty-nine years, but her smile and laugh were the same. Hugging her, I breathed that scrubbed, soapy smell I recalled from my childhood.

"If you ever need a place to stay or you get smart and decide to live on the hill, our home is your home," Jan said as she kissed me good-bye. I knew she meant it.

In Portland, we stayed at a women's commune. The old Victorian house in the northeast section was well kept, but the group was falling apart. The eight women we met invited Sheila and me to join them and asked our opinion on their dilemma. They were split evenly between the "politically" and the "culturally" oriented. The politicos were committed to working with other Left groups for revolution, and the cultural supporters feminist separatism. All the women in the cultural camp had recently come out as lesbians. They were hostile toward me, having read Rita Mae Brown's accusations that I was anti-lesbian. I tried to explain that I was not anti-lesbian, only that I didn't see homosexuality as a feminist issue, but rather a civil rights issue.

My explanation exasperated them and gave weight to the politicos' arguments. The cultural faction regarded lesbianism and separatism as

central and necessary to women's liberation, and far more revolutionary than what they called our "tired old male-oriented Marxism." The political women welcomed the special issue of *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES* and offered to distribute my new essay at all the local universities. They also extended a permanent invitation for anyone from our group to stay with them "under whatever circumstances."

A nearly identical split existed in the women's movement in Seattle, but there the group had already divorced. The cultural group refused to meet with us. The political group bought twenty copies of the journal, leaving us only five. I asked about the Quarternoon underground group in Seattle that I'd seen listed on the FBI poster, and the women smiled but said nothing. Sheila and I left knowing we had friends in Seattle.

The day we returned to Berkeley, the CHP and FBI cars turned up again in front of the house. It was eight days after the assassination of George Jackson, and now a San Francisco police officer had been shot at the Ingleside police station. Two armed men had poked a twelve-gauge shotgun through the speaking hole of the bulletproof window and blazed away. They left a letter from the "George L. Jackson Assault Squad of the Black Liberation Army," claiming responsibility for the "revolutionary violence." The radio reported a police description of a woman driver of the getaway car—a woman in her late twenties, of slender stature, five-foot-four, brown eyes, carrying a Browning 9mm.

"That sounds like me," I said.

"We'd better get back home. They may be trying to set you up," Sheila said.

**SHEILA AND I** set off for New Orleans, accompanied by Mike, a well-known radical journalist we met in Berkeley who had decided to ride with us as far as Houston. He had an appointment with Betita Martinez in New Mexico to interview her for an article he was writing, and I wanted to see her again, too.

We first heard about Attica on the radio on September 9, 1971, as we passed through the high country outside Flagstaff. We pulled off at the next vista point and listened. At a New York state penitentiary, prisoners had broken through a gate and were in control of one of the four prison yards. The insurgents, who had taken forty white prison guards hostage, were described as "militant black nationalists." Attica was described as a massive, sand-colored, ugly, frightening place, with a wall that seemed to stretch for miles. The reporter said that 54 percent of Attica's inmates were black, and all the guards were white. He mentioned the name of one of the few white inmates involved in the rioting, Sam Melville, who had been captured trying to bomb buildings in Manhattan and was now thirty-six years old.

That afternoon, the prisoners communicated their demands. The newsman described the life of the prisoners' elected representative, Elliot

James Barkley, known as L.D. He was a twenty-one-year-old black man from Rochester, New York, who, at the age of eighteen, had cashed a forged money order for \$124.60 and received four years in the reformatory. He was paroled early, but soon after was picked up for driving without a license, which was a violation of his parole. He was then sent to the maximum-security prison at Attica. L.D.'s strong, clear voice came over the radio:

We call upon all the conscientious citizens of America to assist us in putting an end to this situation that threatens the lives of not only us but of each and every one of you as well. We want complete amnesty, meaning freedom from all and any physical, mental and legal reprisals. We want, now, speedy and safe transportation out of confinement to a non-imperialistic country. We demand that the federal government intervene so that we will be under direct federal jurisdiction. We want the Governor and the judiciary to guarantee that there will be no reprisals, and we want all facets of the media to articulate this.

Listening closely to the news of Attica, we turned off Highway 66 onto the state highways that led to the mountain cabin in Rio Arriba County where Betita and her companion, Rees, were staying.

I watched the desert turn to alpine country as we climbed above Santa Fe and passed Los Alamos. We crossed over Pueblo Indian reservations — San Felipe, Santa Domingo, Cochiti, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso. The aspens were bright yellow. In the far northern distance, the eternally white-peaked Rockies looked like a landscape painting. We passed a road sign for Tierra Amarilla and turned west. The sky shimmered indigo and filled with close, twinkling stars. The cold air smelled of earth, juniper, and wood smoke.

Betita and Rees greeted us. The cabin was simple — a living room, a small bedroom, and a kitchen where a wood-burning iron stove provided the cabin's only heat. We gathered around a table near the stove and drank

boiled coffee. Betita and Mike went into the other room to tape their interview. Sheila stretched out on her sleeping bag and went to sleep by the fire. Rees told me the latest news on the land grant movement. Betita returned to the kitchen. I gave her a copy of the new issue of *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES*.

"So you're putting it out again? Great. It's been more than a year, hasn't it?"

"Nearly two years since I had anything to do with it. Cell 16 published one more issue after I left, and then the Trotskyists took it over. It's dead, I think. This is a special issue I edited alone — a collection of my essays from the first three issues and a new essay."

"Let me read the new essay quickly." Rees and I sat silently while Betita scanned the lines quickly, professionally, like the editor she was. Her brow furrowed, and she lit a cigarette.

"Hermana, Roxanne, I love you dearly, but you're dead wrong. You're planning to go underground, aren't you?"

"We already have gone underground, in New Orleans since June. We're returning from a trip," I said. Betita shook her head. She smiled, but it was a smile of disapproval. Rees read the essay, his face contorted. He finished and slammed the journal down on the table.

"Bullshit, Roxanne. What the hell's come over you? This is nuts." I sat at the table with them for hours. It felt like I was being interrogated by Betita, who argued in her soft, reasoned voice; then by Rees, bellowing, slamming the side of his fist on the table, pacing like a wild animal in the zoo. Somehow, both Mike and Sheila slept through the long argument. I trusted Betita and Rees completely and knew they cared about me, but what they were saying felt like the caution of relatives, of parents who worried too much about a child.

"What about women? You have the ears of millions of women and now you disappear on them, desert them, and even lead some into the same inferno you're headed into," Betita argued.

Rees took a different tack. "You're working-class like me. Think about it, this is bourgeois crap. The only kind of working-class people you're

likely to attract are some demented ex-cons or bikers, certainly not the women, certainly not a militant union worker struggling for socialism." I countered by referring to the Wobbly tradition of violence. Rees got angry when I said that. "The Wobblies had to defend themselves and they were a mass of workers. It was their movement. Sure, they bombed things and used violence but they were a grassroots movement. The violence came out of a mass struggle, not from some self-appointed underground groups. I don't have a damned thing against violence, just suicide and misleading people."

"What about Cuba, the attack on the Moncada?" I said.

"Cuba is Cuba. This is the United States, not the situation for a national liberation struggle," Betita said.

We argued back and forth for much of the night, finally deciding to sleep without coming to any sort of resolution. I lay awake thinking, their arguments running through my mind. I struggled to suppress any doubt. The sun rose. Mike, Sheila, and I left.

The next day, September 10, was my thirty-third birthday. Leaving Betita and Rees's place, we wound down the mountain roads without seeing a house or car or person, not even a cow. Back on Highway 66, we listened to the news of Attica. The newscaster interviewed a former

prison counselor, a white man who said that Attica was a miserable place where prisoners spent fourteen to sixteen hours each day in their cells. All their mail was opened and read, and most reading material was denied. They had to talk to visitors through screens. The counselor said he'd helped a few of the prisoners who wanted to learn to read and write.

The first book they chose to read was George Jackson's book, *Soledad Brother*, and the first thing they wrote was a set of demands to the prison authorities. He quoted the passage from Jackson's book that had been adopted as the slogan of that group of Attica prisoners: "I'm going to charge them reparations in blood . . . War without terms." The counselor said he had been fired, accused of giving the prisoners ideas: "They're the ones who gave me ideas. It's a terrible system that treats human beings that way."

The newscaster interviewed the prison superintendent, who asked, "Why are they destroying their home?"

Sam Melville, the white activist, had managed to sneak out a statement, a kind of chant: "We are strong, we are together, we are growing. We love you all. Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh please inform our next of kin." On September 11, I woke in the motel to the TV we had left on all night. It was Saturday, but the usual cartoons were preempted by news of Attica. Bobby Seale of the Black Panthers had arrived. A newsman interviewed Seale and lawyer William Kunstler. On the road, we listened on the radio about *New York Times* reporter Tom Wicker going into the prison to meet with the rebels. He came out and spoke, saying he called for negotiations: "That prison yard was the first place I have ever seen where there was no racism." He reported that the black, white, American Indian, and Puerto Rican rebels were behaving like brothers.

We drove the length of Texas to Houston, hardly talking, transfixed by the news. It was 9 P.M. when we dropped Mike off, then found a motel. Sheila went to bed, and I watched the black-and-white TV for a while hoping for news of Attica, but the Miss America contest was on the only channel received by the television.

I opened a book Rees had given me, saying, "It's about your people." *If You Don't Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* had been published in 1940. I'd never heard of the man, but my Wobbly-Socialist grandfather must have known him. A Bavarian-born immigrant, Ameringer was one of the Socialist Party organizers in Oklahoma during those heady, radical days before World War I. Rees had marked the section on the "Green Corn Rebellion," an account of the 1917 uprising of white, black, and Native American Oklahoma sharecroppers and tenant farmers who were against World War I conscription. I read Ameringer's account of the rebellion.

Farmers are naturally given to direct action, or self-help. This trait is primarily due to their isolation and the strong individualism arising from that fact. To these extreme Leftists, the policy and tac-

tics of the Socialists, as expressed in education, organization and political action, were too slow.

Ameringer had opposed the farmers' guerrilla strategy and warned them all over the world: We got the solution, the solution is unity." The prisoners' morale sounded high, but their fate seemed ominous.

about their plans:

The whole force of the terror following your worse than childish attempt to stop the war will fall upon us Socialists who have so stubbornly opposed America's entrance into the slaughter. Our movement will not recover from that blow for many years. Perhaps never. As for you and your following, you will all be hounded like wild beasts. Some of you will be killed. The bulk of you will land behind the bars. You are marked men, so scatter, while the scattering is still good.

As it turned out, the rebel farmers were crushed and jailed, and the socialists were hounded, many of them arrested or driven out of Oklahoma by the KKK.

The next day, we drove out of Houston into a dawn shrouded by an orange sky dulled by the smoke from oil refineries. I switched radio stations searching for reports of Attica, but found only hurricane advisories. Hurricane Edith had already struck the Caribbean coast of Honduras, and was headed for southern Louisiana. We were annoyed that news of Attica was interrupted, and paid scant attention to the warnings to take cover. As we crossed the Sabine River and entered Louisiana the winds picked up, and by the time we reached Baton Rouge, Sheila could hardly keep the car on the road.

We made it to the outskirts of New Orleans just after noon and decided to check into the Hilton across from the New Orleans airport, which seemed the safest place to take refuge. Workmen were boarding up the hotel windows, and the receptionist said the airport had just closed. We were lucky to beat the crowd that was sure to check in. The storm raged around us. We ordered oyster loaves, french fries, and coffee

from room service and watched television. The hotel had an emergency generator so we had electricity but no phones.

The newsman read a message from a prisoner: "To oppressed people all over the world: We got the solution, the solution is unity." The prisoners' morale sounded high, but their fate seemed ominous. Bobby Seale read a statement. Backed by the gray prison wall, his goaded chin poking the air, he said:

This morning, the commissioner and his aides would not let me in, saying that if I was not going inside to encourage the prisoners to accept the so-called demands made by the committee, they did not want me. I'm not going to do that. The Black Panther Party position is this: The prisoners have to make their own decision.

I felt all hope drain out of me. Only the Panthers could have convinced the prisoners to negotiate a settlement. Rockefeller would use the refusal as a green light for a violent assault. He had just issued a press release that he would not visit the prison as the negotiators requested. I wondered what Abby was thinking.

Watching the eerie, rainy scene on color television, I listened to Tom Wicker recount his interviews with the guards being held hostage. He quoted one of the guards: "If Governor Rockefeller says he won't come, I'm a dead man. He must give the prisoners amnesty." Another hostage told Wicker: "You've read in the papers all these years of the My Lai massacre. That was only 170 some dead — we're going to end up with 1,500 dead here if things don't go right."

That night we fell asleep watching the television images. The last scene I saw was a crowd of surly whites outside the prison shouting racial slurs and calling the rioting prisoners murderers. A voice from the crowd called out to Wicker: "What kind of white man are you, helping niggers against your own?"

On September 13, the fifth day of the siege, the television woke me. Sheila was on her feet, "Look, they're going in to massacre them." The

newscaster said that Governor Rockefeller had approved a military attack on Attica. The National Guard had been called in to assist prison guards and police, all armed with automatic weapons and military carbines. The rioters had no firearms. Horrified, I watched as a helicopter dropped a tear gas bomb and clouds of smoke rose over the gray citadel. Then the firing began.

"You murdering bastards! They're shooting them, they're murdering them!" said civil rights lawyer William Kunstler into the television camera. We watched, stunned. After several hours, the newsmen announced that that "only" thirty-one "rioters" had been killed. A prison spokesman said, "It had to be done. An armed rebellion of the type we have faced threatens the destruction of our free society."

Outdoors the angry Gulf sky still churned but the hurricane had passed. My stomach churned, too, with an empty pain that wasn't hunger. We had work to do. Sheila would arrange a meeting with Homer, Laura, and Hannah, and I would call her in the afternoon. Sheila dropped me in the French Quarter. As I walked toward the river and crossed Decatur, I smelled coffee roasting and doughnuts cooking at my old haunt, the Café du Monde. I sat on the terrace under the canopy facing the river, my back to the Andrew Jackson statue that I'd always wanted to blow up. The place was crowded as always, despite the storm. The taste of the pungent chicory coffee and crunchy beignets brought back memories of the time before we went underground.

As I walked away from the Café du Monde into the wet breeze, I pic- tured the dead now lying in the rain on the concrete yard of Attica. I thought about how the Texas Rangers had displayed the bullet-ridden bodies of Bonnie and Clyde, to scare others who might rebel. I thought about the Green Corn rebel farmers in Oklahoma. I thought about Betita and Rees's pleas, of Ameringer's words.

Our group met for twenty-four hours straight, broken only by brief naps and sandwiches. I told them what Betita and Rees had argued, and how, in thinking hard about it, I had come to believe we were on a nihilistic, even

suicidal, mission. I was determined to abandon the underground project. We all knew we had to come to a consensus and that we wanted to continue working together, but I would not budge from my position. The others finally agreed. We decided to carry on with our goal of supporting unionization of the oil workers and environmental protections for Cajun fishing culture; we would work openly again and concentrate on organizing the Cajun community, and move west to the Cajun capital, Lafayette. Disassembling what we had built proved to be just as tedious and dangerous as it had been putting it together. We had to tell our former associates of our decision, close down the safe houses, and consolidate and get rid of the weapons. Laura took a job in the university bookstore in Lafayette—her hometown—and found a safe place to store our weapons while we disposed of all of them except our personal Brownings. Homer moved to Baton Rouge and continued his roostabout job. Sheila moved in with Homer and drove a pie wagon that served the dockworkers in Baton Rouge. Hannah remained at the St. Bernard diner. I took a clerical job in the records department of Humble Oil (soon to become Exxon) in Lafayette.

In early November, I ventured into New Orleans to retrieve the mimeograph machine and stereo from the Jackson Avenue house. I hadn't been near there since June, when we disappeared. After loading the stuff into the trunk of the car, I drove slowly through the New Orleans Garden District, remembering what it had been like to live there. The reflective moment turned to chaos when I was stopped by the police in front of one of the cloistered mansions.

Where had they come from? Mine had seemed to be the only vehicle on the palm- and magnolia-shrouded street, and suddenly, four blue-and-white New Orleans patrol cars surrounded me. One jackknifed in front and one in back of me, while the other ones flanked each side. The one on my right drove up on the sidewalk against the six-foot-high, wrought-iron fence that walled off the mansion.

Eight white men with snarling faces and Smith and Wesson .357s surrounded my car.

One of the cops leaned over my hood, holding a Police Special riot gun trained between my eyes. There was a crash of glass as one of them broke the driver's side window, and the shards scattered and danced inside the car. The cold steel of a .357 pressed against my head, just below my left ear.

My hands sprung off the steering wheel into the air, palms open. I congratulated myself on the decision I'd made a few minutes earlier to stow my Browning in the trunk with the things I'd just picked up at the Jackson Avenue house.

I expected residents to come out to check on the racket and flashing red lights, but the street remained silent and empty beyond the concentrated chaos that surrounded me. I awaited orders and did not budge or even twitch. I stared down the barrel of the shotgun, leaning slightly into the .357 pressed against my head so the hand that held it might feel secure, in control. I could sense that hand trembling. These men were terrified, and a terrified animal was a dangerous animal. My father had taught me to stay calm in the presence of animals. He said they smelled fear and mistook it for aggression, and they reacted instinctively, attacking in self-defense. I remained calm.

Finally, the order came: "Get out with your hands up." Just like in the movies. I stood, arms extended upward. Meaty hands patted and pawed me all over, lingering around the waist, under the arms, and the ankles. I felt excruciating pain as my arms were nearly ripped out of their sockets, and I was handcuffed. A chain attached to the handcuffs was wrapped around my ankles, and they had trussed me like a Thanksgiving turkey. Hobbling and half-dragged, I was pushed into the backseat of a patrol car.

That was my first arrest. My daddy's proud record—"Your people done all right—nobody in either family ever gone to no jail"—was smitten.

I sat on the edge of the seat, my bound legs askew. The slightest movement drove the dull edges of the handcuffs into the thin layer of flesh around my wrist bones. The cop drove fast and took corners at high speed. I fell over one way and then the other; they laughed each time. They were deliberately taking a roundabout route to Civic Center.

The cop driving said to his partner, "You ever screwed a squaw?"

"Too dirty. Got diseases. I like nigger pussy."

"I think I'll try me one."

We were on Tchoupitoulas Street near the river. They turned right on Napoleon and stopped in the midst of the huge cotton warehouses on the riverfront. It was 5 P.M., and no one was around. They both turned and looked at me. Their faces were sweaty, their lips moist and too red. I bit my tongue to keep from spitting at them.

"Naw, squaw's too mean and dirty."

At the New Orleans jail, a female officer took my Timex and wallet and dragged me into a small room. She unbuttoned my shirt and slacks, stuck a finger up my vagina and then my anus, took my shoes and socks off and spread each toe. I watched in detached fascination as I was fingerprinted. The matron escorted me down a maze of long hallways to a cell. My mouth felt filled with cotton. I asked the matron for a drink of water when I discovered there was no faucet in the cell.

"This ain't no hotel, lady." She slammed the thick, steel door. In the cell was a black woman I assumed to be a prostitute by the way she was dressed—a blonde wig, false eyelashes, spike heels, and a short, red satin dress. It crossed my mind that perhaps the person was a man disguised as a woman, maybe even a white man disguised as a black woman. I lay down on the hard narrow bench—I was still shackled and sitting was painful—and dozed.

Jolted awake, I gasped for breath. My cellmate was choking me. I thrashed and broke away. I didn't know if she or he was put up to attacking me or was just crazy, but I braced myself against the wall, my legs cocked for defense, and when she came close I pushed her backward. She never fell or lost her balance, but finally slumped in the corner and nodded off.

After seven hours, they released me without filing charges. The black custodian who took me to my car said, "Look to me like the Feds wanna foller yer scent steada lockin' you away. Me, I druther be safe in the tank."

"The FBI told the New Orleans police to release me?" I asked.

"What I done heard."

I went directly to a local civil rights lawyer who seemed no more surprised than I was about my harassment by the New Orleans police. Through some mysterious lawyerly means, he obtained a copy of the police report that told of an anonymous tip leading to the police action. They had received information that I would be leaving the Jackson Avenue house with explosives and weapons, and that I was armed and dangerous.

"The FBI may have been trying to set you up," the lawyer said.

No charges were filed against me. I returned to Lafayette to work, and to start over. I felt safe in Lafayette. Laura lived only a few blocks away, and we shared dinner nearly every evening, often with young Cajuns. Laura was enthusiastic about being back home and working at the university where the majority of students were Cajuns. On Sundays, Sheila, Hannah, and Homer visited and told their own stories of work and life and organizing possibilities. I think we were all humbled by our terrible choices that could have led to bloody tragedy. We were starting over.

The new essay in the issue of *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES* that I had published in California weighed heavily on me, and I decided to send out an anti-underground statement. In an essay I called "'The Movement' and the Working Class," I analyzed the various left organizations and their sectarianism, repudiating all of them, including the strategy of urban guerrilla warfare promoted by the Weather Underground. I expressed hope in a revolutionary movement that would emerge from autonomous working-class-based African-American, Latino, and women's organizations. Regarding my own female liberation theory, I wrote:

through personal struggles, especially during a social revolution, individuals can transform themselves, and future possibilities for the society at large can be envisioned.

The question I tried to pose when I began questioning the role of women had to do with the suppression of women in the movement, and the prejudice against organizing working women and wives of workers . . . One idea that I developed—that bourgeois women are in reality "proletariat" is simply ridiculous . . . If they become revolutionary, they would have to embrace and learn socialist theory and work in the class struggle, not for their own rights and privileges.

Although simplistic in its presentation, that thinking became the bedrock of my political theory.

Letters that arrived from Betita and Rees in New Mexico were like lifelines. In a sixteen-page, typewritten letter, Rees responded to my essay on the movement and the working class, reminding me that I was still addressing the movement and not my own people, his people—the working class. He wrote:

I don't believe working people have to prove to anyone their courage, their willingness to fight for what they believe is right, nor their willingness to use whatever means necessary, violently, to achieve what they believe is right. This agonizing over violence, this big dread in the pit of the belly with all the hairs tickling nervously, this simultaneous infatuation and dread of violence and its instrument—the gun—this is a middle-class, booshy phenomenon. We don't have to prove to anyone that we will fight . . . Our people will fight when they are ready, not when the bourgeois, this segment, this branch, this quivering hair of righteous indignation, tells us to go forth. We were cannon fodder for the fathers; would the sons have us repeat the history? In the name of revolution—their revolution? We will decide how, what, when, where—and who.

The question of women has been greatly distorted in the past few years. I contributed to some of the absurd theory that has developed. The questions around sexuality and childbearing are questions that cannot be solved under the present kind of system. Only when the capitalist ideology and competitive relations are eradicated institutionally, can real solutions be made. Of course,

That fall, Homer received an invitation to participate in forming a new national organization that would try to pick up the pieces of the ~~new~~ age of the New Left. We experienced a moment of guarded hope and decided to attend. The three-day Thanksgiving 1971 meeting took place in Davenport, Iowa, the Mississippi River port city where the wheat barges bound for New Orleans were loaded. The organizers were former white civil rights workers and early SDS officers, all old and trusted friends of Homer's. They called the new organization the New American Movement. NIAM was conceived to bring together community and workplace organizers from all over the country to form a network of shared information and ideas. Its proponents wanted it to become a political force if not a new political party.

A hundred or so mostly white, mostly male, seasoned activists gathered in the Blackhawk Hotel ballroom. Homer knew everyone there. I had heard many of their names and had met a few of them, including the main organizer, Staughton Lynd, who was the son of a famous pair of sociologists who wrote the classic *Middletown*. In the mid-sixties, he had been fired from his job as a professor in history at Yale for traveling to Fanoi. Before that, he had been a member of the inner circle that made up "the beloved community." Soon he and his wife, Alice, would become labor lawyers in Youngstown, Ohio. They were proponents of nonviolent, direct action and were close to the Quakers.

For me, the meeting was a surreal experience. I found myself in the midst of committed individuals, most of who had risked their lives and abandoned lucrative careers. These individuals would never give up, never sell out, and yet I felt as if I were walking among the dead. There were no sparks of electricity; there was no energy in that ballroom. Perfectly formed words and sentences made no sense to me; they contained a kind of jargon that I couldn't untangle. Yet everyone else spoke up with conviction as if they understood and were understood perfectly. I felt I'd been dropped in from outer space.

The focus of the discussion was the "working class" (meaning white, male, industrial workers) and how to organize them. But nothing they

about the working class resonated for me. They avoided the issues of supremacy, belligerent patriotism, and gross sexism among white workers; rather they stressed economic aspirations.

I realized they were good and submitted my reactions and listened. But they were afraid. Afraid of revolution on the horizon, afraid of African-American insurgency, afraid of the working class, afraid of women's liberation, afraid ultimately of democracy. And it was their fear that deadened their souls and would make them ineffective. They were, after all, libertarians trying to devise an agenda to maintain the status quo while indicating the ugly aspects—genocidal wars, virulent racism, overt sexism, staggering poverty. They were trying to work out the program for a more humane counterrevolution. Homer affirmed my feelings.

"But our reactions were negative, and we didn't know what to do next either, just what not to do. Soon I would discover that my options were extremely limited.

FBI. January 10, 1972. Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation went to interview Roxanne Dunbar at her residence, 312 Simcoe Street, Apartment 4A, Lafayette, Louisiana. Dunbar stood at the door of her apartment and politely declined to allow the agents to enter her apartment since it was during her dinner and she said that she had a guest waiting.

FBI. 1-24-72. Roxanne Amanda Dunbar, #69069, Arrested, Lafayette, La. Giving false info in order to obtain a Louisiana Driver's License.

FBI. On January 27, 1972, Roxanne Amanda Dunbar was interviewed at Kenner, Louisiana, by Special Agents of the FBI. She advised that she had nothing to hide and she did not believe that any of her activities violated any laws, either federal or state, and that everything she has done has been above board.

FBI. Roxanne Dunbar is a nationally known New Left figure, has belonged to numerous New Left and radical organizations throughout the United States, and was co-leader of the New Orleans Urban Guerrilla Group (NOUGG) [an FBI invention], an extremist group which is now disbanded, which had as its avowed goal the overthrow of the United States Government.

On January 24, 1972, about an hour after I arrived for work at Humble Oil, I looked up and found my office invaded by what looked like unfriendly spacemen, their heads under plastic bubbles. Then I saw the guns—police special riot guns, M-16 automatic rifles, long-barreled 38s, and realized that it was a SWAT team. A man in a cowboy hat and boots emerged from among them and stood in front of my desk.

"I'm the sheriff of Lafayette Parish. You are under arrest. Don't try anything smart. Stand up and put your hands in the air, slowly."

Handcuffed and shackled, I hobbled down the long hallway now lined with employees staring in stunned horror. I caught a glimpse of the personnel director sitting in his office talking to the FBI agents I recognized as the ones who had come to my door at home three times in that many weeks. In the parking lot, three more men in dark suits were searching me, surrounding me, weapons ready, sweating fear, fingers on triggers. At the Lafayette Parish jail, they dragged me down a wide, dim hallway that was lined with small rooms without bars. One door was open. Laura sat inside. She nodded.

"Leave her alone. She has done nothing. Let her go," I said to my captors. Laura shook her head and put a finger to her lips.

The SWATs shoved me into a room. I landed facedown as the heavy metal door slammed behind me. I tried to get up, and I heard a voice that said, "Need a hand?"

I saw several sets of large feet in identical shoes, those shiny black shoes cops wear when they're trying to look plainclothed. A big red hand with a huge gold Masonic ring grabbed my upper arm like a vice, lifted me, and slammed me on a rickety wooden chair. It was the cowboy-looking sheriff who had arrested me.

I was not in a jail cell but a windowless room with sick green walls. A blackened window filled one wall—someone was behind it watching, but who? The sheriff introduced the three other men: the sheriff of St. Bernard Parish, a New Orleans police lieutenant from the Intelligence Division, and a Lafayette deputy.

I stared back at the men who gawked at me and I felt the strange power I had felt when I was arrested in New Orleans. The fear I instilled in those heavily armed men was phenomenal to me. In the back of my mind was something the Vietnamese women had said in Montreal in 1969, something about the male Christian fear of women as the unknown.

"Where's your combat boots and guns, Roxanne? When did you start wearing miniskirts?" I was wearing a skirt hiked up to my hips due to the shackles that bound me. I wore cotton tights underneath. The one who asked me that question was a Robert Redford look-alike, the one the sheriff had said was a New Orleans police intelligence officer which, translated, meant what we'd called the "red squad."

"I haven't seen you for a while, about eight months now, isn't it? I've missed our daily meetings," he said.

"I've never seen you before in my life." The man's boyish good looks were repulsive to me. He jumped up and put his face an inch from mine. "You don't recognize this face?" I told myself to be careful, perhaps he was psychotic and believed he was Redford.

"No," I said.

He pulled himself up straight—he was tall and athletically built—and stood close to me, his pants leg brushing my knee, making my skin crawl. "I followed you every day for seven months, from November 1970, when you got back from Cuba, to June 1971. Every day. How could you not remember this face? I drove an undercover patrol car with Illinois license plates. Don't you remember?" He seemed on the brink of tears or a breakdown. What was that act? Why should I recognize him?

"I remember the Illinois car sitting in front of the house and following me, and I knew it was the police, but I don't remember your face." The open-handed slap on the side of my head made my ears ring, brought water to my eyes, made my left cheek burn furiously. Don't react, I told myself, and above all don't be smart-mouthed.

"Fuckin dyke! You have that sweet innocent look of a child, but I'm not fooled. You are rotten to the core, incorrigible." A spray of his saliva

fell on my face as he hissed the words that hung in the air, reverberating off the walls.

"Take it easy Timmy. In Cuba, they brainwash them and train them to lie. But they can be broken," the Lafayette Parish sheriff said. He sat in a chair directly in front of me and placed his foot between my legs, spreading them. The toe of his fancy black cowboy boot rested on the edge of my chair. The boot had an engraved, sterling silver tip. I wiggled back further in the chair so his silver-tipped toe did not touch my crotch. I thought about how lucky I was that it had been cold that morning, that I had gone back inside to put on cotton tights. What a lucky decision. The sheriff pressed his foot against my chair, tipping me backward.

"You are going to talk to us, Roxanne, baby. The FBI tried to be nice about it but I told them they're too nice. A broad like you needs a little coaxing."

Now I realized that FBI agents watched from behind the two-way mirror on the wall. He tipped the chair backward at an angle. My hands, bound behind my back, trembled. If I fell, I told myself, my wrists might break and that would hurt but I would not die of it. The sheriff held up a map of Louisiana in front of me, still tipping the chair backward.

"This map was found in your car by my deputies. What do the red circles around Plaquemines Parish, Baton Rouge, Fort Polk, and Hercules mean?"

"That is not my map," I said. I had a Louisiana map in my car but it was worn at the seams from use. The one he held was crisp and new with unfamiliar red circles drawn with magic markers.

"Don't give me that bull!" The sheriff thrust his leg forward and knocked my chair backward. Instinctively, I tucked my chin so the back of my head didn't suffer the blow. The other men laughed as my chair crashed on the cement floor. I lay on my back, helpless. My wrists and arm sockets screamed. I stared at the ceiling—it was made of squares with small holes, painted the same sickening green. Sound-proofing so no one would hear me if I screamed. I'd seen it in radio studios.

The sheriff's broad face filled my line of vision. It occurred to me that

he didn't speak the southern Louisiana dialect or have a French accent; he was not a southerner at all. I wanted to ask him where he was from and why a Yankee was the sheriff of Lafayette, Louisiana. I was sincerely curious, always interested in where people hailed from, and how they ended up where they were. But the question was too intimate for an enemy.

"You want up?" I didn't answer but just stared into his eyes.

"She thinks shes goddamned Ché Guevara." The voice of the Redford character said that. And I thought of Ché being interrogated in just that way, tied in a chair, his hands behind his back, in that one-room schoolhouse on the edge of the Bolivian jungle. The Bolivian military officer who interrogated him had done the same thing that I just experienced—knocked over Ché's chair repeatedly. Had these backwater cops read about Ché? Were they duplicating the scene, or was it a coincidence? The officer had finally shot and killed Ché when he raised his legs and shoved the officer across the room, ordering him to address him as a general and treat him as a prisoner of war.

The sheriff jerked my chair upright, and the room spun.

"Your little coon-ass buddy is next door singing like a bird. She says you are a violent, dangerous terrorist, and that your gang plans to bomb Fort Polk and the state capitol building and oil refineries in Hercules and Plaquemines Parish. That's what these red marks on your map indicate. She identified this map," the sheriff said. He had set my chair upright and his foot pressed between my legs, tipping me backward again.

I was almost certain that if Laura were to talk she'd tell the truth about our former plans to blow up the interstate pipeline and the wheat barges on the river. I could tell that they really didn't know what we'd been up to, and I knew the sheriff was lying about Laura. But I wondered if they were torturing her. Laura was so frail and delicate.

"Laura is old and sick. You'd better not hurt her."

The New Orleans pretty boy stood at my side. His face was flushed and twisted, the sunny boyish look gone.

"We have evidence from the FBI that you provided the weapons that killed a federal marshal up in northern Louisiana at that Republic of

New Afrika stronghold. They got the guns and they traced them to your gang."

I couldn't recall the details or when it had happened, but several car-loads of federal marshals had stormed an RNA house and the black residents inside shot back, killing one of the marshals. Two RNA men were in Angola prison charged with murder. Had one of them fingered us? In any case, it wasn't true. None of our weapons were involved, but how could that be proven? We supported the RNA, Sheila and I had traveled to Cuba with two RNA members. My mind raced, considering murder charges. I could see the picture—the FBI was going to do to me what they did to Pretty Boy Floyd, John Dillinger, or Bonnie and Clyde, pinning every crime in the Southwest on me.

"Murder One. Too bad there's no federal death penalty, but you'll be looking at a life sentence," pretty boy Timmy said.

"There's more than one way to skin a cat." A new voice came from behind me, the St. Bernard sheriff was speaking—Perez was his name, related to Leander Perez, the Isleño oil king of Plaquimines Parish. Then it dawned on me why he was there, that I'd lied on my application for a driver's license in St. Bernard Parish, and they had come to get me. Then I knew that that was all they could charge me with, as it was the only law I had broken.

"That's a fact," the Lafayette sheriff said.

"Could end up like them civil rights people. What was their names?" the St. Bernard sheriff said. I knew he was referring to Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner—two northern whites—and James Chaney, a black Mississippian, who had been arrested during the 1964 Mississippi summer voter registration, then released. After they left the jail they were seized, shot, and buried.

"Sure, we've got the Klan here, too," Timmy said.

"Wait a minute, boys. I want her alive. She's my Angela Davis. Roxanne will put us on the map," the Lafayette sheriff said. I pictured Angela awaiting trial for murder in Santa Clara, California.

"Yeah, maybe I'll finally get a job with the Secret Service with this

notch in my belt. Don't you boys forget that I'm the one on her case from the get-go," Timmy said.

"Nobody's going to shortchange you, Timmy. You're a top-notch officer. But still, it'll put the Lafayette Parish sheriff's department on the map. Maybe I can get out of this coon-ass operation."

I felt numb and cold. They were ordinary careerists who regarded me as a vehicle for their promotions. What had the FBI told them about me? Didn't they know I wasn't famous like Angela? But then, Angela wasn't famous until the FBI christened her a terrorist. I wondered how many promotions had come out of Angela's case?

Without warning, the sheriff shoved my chair back again. I was unprepared and the back of my head hit hard.

"Let's book the bitch. She's not going to talk. Too damned well trained by the Cubans. She's a professional. The feds will take care of her."

He thrust his sweaty face close to mine and hissed, "You have no future, and you are a marked woman, wait and see."

They all left except for the Lafayette deputy who had not spoken. He removed the handcuffs and shackles and walked me to the office for processing. I didn't see Laura in the room where she had been earlier. The deputy's badge read "Boudet."

"Are you a Cajun?" I asked.

"That I be," he said.

"How can you put up with them talking like that about your people, calling them coon asses?"

"You get used to it," he said.

The deputy fingerprinted and booked me. A bail bondsman offered to assume the \$1,000 bond that was imposed. I called my lawyer in New Orleans, then Laura. She answered with a weak, frightened voice. She had not been interrogated or booked, but she had returned to a wrecked house. We arranged to meet at my apartment.

Laura and I arrived in front of my apartment at the same time. My door was wide open and the place was ransacked—papers torn up and strewn everywhere, my phonograph records smashed, the stereo crushed,

my clothing shredded, dishes broken, the mattress gutted. There was an eviction notice tacked to the door.

The next morning I called the personnel manager at Humble. He said, "I don't want to let you go, but the head office in Houston made the decision. FBI spoke to them and said you were working at Humble to get dynamite and information to sabotage our wells. I don't believe that but, well, you know how it is."

"I understand. It's out of your hands."

I called Sheila, Hannah, and Homer, and told them they should get out of Louisiana immediately so the FBI would have no excuse to bust us all on conspiracy charges. They each decided to go to their parents' homes—Sheila to Texas, Homer to Florida, and Hannah to Connecticut. I spent a week feeling lost and scared, staying in the wrecked apartment, on the phone with my lawyer in New Orleans.

A week later, Buddy reappeared and he whisked me off to Houston to live with him, and soon I found myself in a subterranean world more deeply underground than before, in the world of the damned. I didn't regard Buddy as my protector, but rather as my cover, which made me in fact his captive. I decided to pretend to be a housewife, hoping to fool the police agencies so that they eventually would forget about me.

When Buddy and his wife had reconciled and he returned to Houston, they'd bought a two-bedroom mobile home in a trailer park off Interstate 10 on the eastern edge of town. Buddy had promised her that he would work locally rather than travel again for Brown and Root. Nevertheless, she had left him again, and this time she had served him with divorce and custody papers.

That trailer on the edge of nowhere, in a treeless, marshy trailer park seemed like a viable camouflage and a safe place for me, even if I was living with an apolitical, abusive drunk. Of course, there was more to it than that; I was still drawn to Buddy culturally, and to being immersed in the blue-collar world of South Houston. In reality, I was dangerously isolated, lonely, and dependent on Buddy, and my life spiraled out of control for the months I was there.

I registered with Kelly Girls under my own name. My first work assignment was at a Teamster shop, Sea Land, a truck-to-ship container company with a near monopoly in that business. I also worked at American Can, the Federal Reserve Bank, Dow Chemical, and even a few days at Brown and Root.

When I was temping at Brown and Root, the Immigration and Naturalization Service raided for "illegals," undocumented Mexican workers. I was swept up with the others into waiting buses and taken to a deportation center. Fortunately, I had a Houston lawyer because of my pending case in Louisiana, and he made sure I was released. My driver's license and other identification were irrelevant to the *migra* (as the Mexicans among us called the INS officers); they demanded either passports or green cards. (Since that incident, I have always carried my passport.)

After three days on the job at Dow Chemical, the Oil and Chemical Workers Union called a strike and I joined the picket line. Some local antiwar activists handed out leaflets describing the effects of napalm that was being used in Vietnam and was manufactured by Dow. I jotted down information that I could pass on to them.

Nothing seemed to have changed in the time-clock work world since my employment a decade before. The clerical workers were all white women and the bosses were all white men, whereas the custodians, truck drivers, and assembly-line workers were almost all Mexican and African-American men. Black and Mexican women were still consigned to housekeeping in the service industry or in private homes.

While I was working at the Federal Reserve Bank in downtown Houston, the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) happened to hold its first convention at the nearby huge convention center. Mainstream feminists such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, and Sissy Farenthold had created NWPC. During my lunch hours that week, I walked around the meeting halls, feeling like an alien. This was now the trajectory of "feminism"—electoral politics and the Democratic Party. I wanted nothing to do with it.

I thought I was where I wanted to be, back in the "soup" of the work-

ing class, and I quickly embraced its most destructive element—alcohol. All my adult life, I had been terrified of drunken behavior, and I had treated booze like a sharp knife, to be handled with care. But in Houston, living with a violent alcoholic and in a traumatized mental state, I tapped into that alcoholic gene that had been dormant in me until then.

The only time I was sober was during my five-day workweek, and at work my hands trembled and my head pounded from hangovers. I had plenty of company; only the few Pentecostals among my co-workers eschewed drink. The rest of us counted the minutes until we could escape to the dark corners of a nearby lounge, ubiquitous in working-class east and south Houston.

Buddy and I went dancing and drinking at dives from Galveston to South Houston every night. We made the rounds from shacks like Country Corner to showy dance halls like Mickey Gilley's. Every joint had a local live band, from Bob Wills-style country-mariachi to Tex-Mex to Cajun. After closing time we would fight, usually over my alleged flirting. Television images featuring the unending bombing of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia; Nixon and Kissinger in China toasting Mao Tsetung; Nixon's re-election campaign against George McGovern; and something about a break-in at the Washington, D.C., Democratic National Headquarters in the Watergate building, formed an eerie and unreal backdrop to our subterranean life. The constant alcohol haze I lived in numbed any sense of responsibility or impulse to do anything about any of it.

The party ended when the FBI showed up at the trailer one night. When I arrived home, tipsy from happy hour, I found Buddy entertaining the Feds with stories of his adventures with the revolutionaries. I could see the outline of the shoulder holsters that I knew contained Smith and Wesson .357 Magnums, and I noticed the tape recorder whirling. I attempted damage control by making jokes about it all. When I finally got rid of them, I cautioned Buddy about talking to the FBI. Drunk and surly and provoked by my criticism, he knocked me against every aluminum wall in that trailer until he passed out.

The next day I left him and drove to California. I wanted to be near Michelle and knew I could get a job in electronics assembly. The electronics industry reputedly would hire anyone who showed up, with no questions asked. I rented a room in San Jose, fifty miles south of San Francisco, and took a job at the Fairchild Semiconductor plant where there were many undocumented and incognito workers. Pay was minimum wage, and there were no benefits beyond my anonymity.

This was my first job in assembly-line production. I worked in a windowless, airtight basement where silicon wafers that looked like thin clamshells were produced. The wafers were then shipped to Fairchild assembly plants in Asia, the Pacific, and along the border inside Mexico, to be cut into tiny pieces and stamped with information. Finally, they would return to the mother plant in Mountain View for "quality control" testing. The resulting electronic conductors were used for the military's electronic battlefield in Southeast Asia. The chips were also sold to companies for everything from guided missiles to computers to television sets to calculators.

It wasn't difficult to understand why unionization had never been attempted at Fairchild. The electronics industry had invented the concept of the "global assembly line." There was no beginning, middle, or end of production in any one Fairchild plant, but rather a zigzag of production and shipping so that if one plant was closed down for any reason, it would hardly be missed. The single vital process that occurred in one place was wafer manufacturing, where I worked. Once I learned about the global manufacturing process and found its Achilles' heel, I began thinking about organizing a union.

From inhaling the powdery, raw silicon to bathing the wafers in a series of toxic chemicals, wafer manufacturing was bad for the assembly-line workers' health. One drop of any of the chemicals would burn deep into the flesh. A real spill or splash would kill. Every day, the chemicals were replaced and the used chemical soup went straight into the local sewer system, seeping into the groundwater and local streams. Yet the electronics industry was, and still is, considered "clean." The inside of the

plant was spotless. We wore rubber gloves, not to protect our hands, but to protect the wafers.

When I learned about the dangers and witnessed an accident that sent a coworker to the hospital, I asked the supervisor about protective gear. He regarded me suspiciously and pointed to a closet that contained goggles, rubber boots, and coveralls. Inside the closet door, a sticker from the U.S. Department of Labor stipulated that protective gear must be provided to workers, but it didn't say the workers had to wear it. The supervisor watched me as I removed the items and put them on. The other assembly-line workers—all women—stopped working and stared. From then on, I wore the clumsy gear even though no one else did, and several of the women warned me that the last person who had requested protective clothing had been fired. I didn't care if I was fired; I would go to another plant under another name or I would go back to Kelly Girls.

I worked from 7 A.M. to 4 P.M. After work, all of the women who didn't have to rush home to care for children and/or husbands gathered at the nearby Lyons restaurant for happy hour. Several of the women had worked in electronics assembly plants in Arizona and on the Mexican border. I used happy hour as a time to discuss the possibility of unionizing with the workers most likely to take risks—the young and childless women. They were a diverse group—two Latinas, a Filipina, two African Americans, a Navajo, and three white women.

Beyond the usual labor complaints of low pay and no benefits, the female workers had unique problems of child care, spousal abuse, sexual advances by male supervisors, and, for the graveyard shift workers, instances of rape in the unlighted parking lot. The workers were only vaguely aware that Fairchild's capital came directly from the taxpayers through military contracts (and their profits went to the owners); the Vietnam War fueled and supported the semiconductor industry. It seemed an opportunity for a new kind of labor organizing that would link imperialism, capitalism, and patriarchy. I was regaining my sense of self and was able to see a path I could take. I also wanted to study labor law, so I applied and was accepted at nearby Santa Clara University law

school for the fall. But just as I was beginning to gather a small group of women into an advance union-organizing team, I was forced to return to Louisiana for trial stemming from my Lafayette arrest.

The secretary in the Lafayette bondsman's office called me. I knew I was still under bond, waiting for the Lafayette charges to be dropped. My only obligation to the bondsman was to keep him informed of my whereabouts, which I had done. His obligation was to inform me if a trial date was set. The secretary, however, told me that her boss had ordered her *not* to inform me, but that she'd decided to do so anyway. I had been indicted in St. Bernard Parish and a trial date had been set. Her boss had promised St. Bernard district attorney Perez not to inform me so that I could be charged with jumping bond (a felony) and be declared a fugitive from justice. She told me that the trial date was only three days away. My lawyer in New Orleans tried to get the date postponed, to no avail, and said I'd better go to Louisiana for the trial since Perez was considering charging me with criminal anarchy, a major felony on a par with first-degree murder.

My lawyer said I would need witnesses, but I didn't want to involve Laura or anyone in the New Orleans movement. My only hope was Buddy. I drove to Houston and he agreed to testify for me, to vouch for the time we had lived together in St. Bernard Parish and for the recent time I had spent with him since my arrest. And it worked. In a plea bargain with Perez, I was charged with only a misdemeanor and given a year probation on a six-month sentence, and I was told leave the state before dark and never to return to Louisiana; I was only too happy to comply.

Buddy talked me into trying to start over, and I unwisely moved back to Houston and transferred my probation to Texas. I got the best ACLU lawyer in Houston who advised me to stay there for the year of my probation. One year. I thought I could do it. Buddy and I drank, partied, and fought.

On the day after my thirty-fourth birthday in 1972, two months after moving back to Houston, I came to consciousness blinded by the sun that

glared through the window. I looked around, terrified. My vision was blurred and I could hardly move the upper part of my body. The sheets were sticky with blood. On my forehead just above my eye, I found the source—a deep gash. My right hand was purple and swollen and looked deformed. I was dressed in Levis and a short-sleeved, blood-soaked blouse.

I walked around, looked in the bathroom, in the closet, the living room, kitchen. It was 7 A.M. and there was no sign of Buddy. No matter how drunk he'd been the night before, he always made it to work at 6 A.M. I took off my bloody blouse and put on one of Buddy's long-sleeved checkered shirts. Then I called a cab and grabbed my purse. I had nearly \$20, enough for a round trip in the cab. But where was I to go? I called information for hospital emergency room, and the operator gave me an address. I had no insurance and wondered if they would treat me. In the emergency room, the admissions clerk asked if I had insurance, and when I said I didn't she just checked a square and asked me questions about allergies and previous diseases. Within minutes a doctor was poking around, cleverly finding the most painful spots, including some I hadn't yet identified. Then came X-rays, stitches, shots, blood tests, and a cast up to my elbow. "Fifth metacarpal, wrist to the knuckle of your little finger. Complex fracture," the doctor said. I then remembered trying to fend off Buddy's attack. We had both been drunk, but I must have swung a Tae Kwan Do blow with my hand taut and open, using the side. Sword Hand. I got some pleasure from imagining the injury I may have inflicted upon him.

The doctor, a tall young man with an east Texas drawl, said, "You can put him in jail for this, you know. Would you like me to help you report it?"

"Report what? I fell. I was alone," I lied. He shrugged.

When I returned home, I sat down at the kitchen table and asked myself: What now? If I stayed, I would end up dead, and I was beginning to believe that Buddy would profit from the deed. He was my assassin, either hired or volunteer. I recalled my own female liberation slogan from 1968, in response to police brutality against students and in African-American ghettos: For women, all men are the police.

I went down to my car and dug my Browning 9mm out of its hiding place under the spare tire in the trunk. I'd kept it hidden from Buddy; I didn't want him to know I had a pistol. I had always practiced with my left hand but had never developed accuracy. Now I wished I had a shotgun loaded with buckshot that required no precision. I swore I would never again be without a shotgun.

I needed help, but I couldn't bring myself to call any of my movement friends and for them to know the condition I was in. And I was estranged from everyone in my family. Then I thought of Jan, my brother's ex-wife. She would understand and would not judge me. I dialed her number in Lake Tahoe. I told her my hand was broken; that the man I had lived with had done it. I had to get out of there, and I wanted to take her up on her invitation to come to Lake Tahoe.

She said she would catch a flight and be in Houston by 5 P.M. "If he comes back, call the police or shoot the son of a bitch." Seventeen years before, when I was sixteen years old, Jan had rescued me from my drunken mother.

I knew I probably wouldn't have to call the police or kill Buddy. After eight months of living with him, I was familiar with his habits. I knew I would be safe until later that night when he would be drunk enough to harm me. Nevertheless, I sat at the table with my Browning in my left hand, pointed at the door.

Jan arrived in Houston that night. She helped me collect a few belongings—including my Olivetti and my Browning—and we began the long car trip to Lake Tahoe. On the way, she told me stories about living in Lake Tahoe and about the casinos. I passed in and out of consciousness, listening and dreaming. We arrived after dark the next day, driving through velvet blackness the last hour.

X  
"INDIAN COUNTRY"

LATE SEPTEMBER 1972. I lay on the couch in the front room, watching the thin autumn light. The house smelled of raw pine. I felt like a child in Jan's care, just as I had twenty years earlier when she was married to my brother. I planned to stay with Jan and her husband Rudy and my two nieces and three nephews for six weeks, until my cast came off. I had \$500 in cash; if I was frugal, I could stretch the money for a few months without working. I would stay in Tahoe for the year of my probation, and then I planned to move back to San Jose and go to law school.

The days came and went, fading from blue to pink to inky black. Time passed. I didn't tell Jan anything of the past four years, and she asked no questions. She and other family members screened my calls to protect me from Buddy. I told them that he might call pretending to be someone else, like a policeman or FBI. But I was lying; Buddy would not venture west of Texas. What I feared was the FBI. The practice of lying came easier than truth. In that short time underground, I'd learned not to involve others too much, and to trust no one.

I transferred my probation from Texas to California. I was assigned to a probation officer in South Lake Tahoe who had just graduated from

criminology school. He was California laid-back and unsuspicious. "Please, call me Jeff," he said as he propped his legs on his messy desk. He wore faded Levis, a worn flannel Pendleton, and motorcycle boots. "You probably could've bribed those crooked cops in Louisiana and gotten out of the whole thing. Would've cost less than your fine." He flipped through the papers, shaking his head at the heavy year probation and six-month suspended prison sentence for a first-time traffic misdemeanor. I had been charged in Louisiana with "bearing false witness to an officer of the law" for having obtained a Louisiana driver's license under a false name.

Jeff was on my side. But I wondered how he might react if the FBI sent him one of those reports that portrayed political radicals as psychotic murderers. I knew it was only a matter of time before they located me now that I was registered with the sheriff's department under my own name. As I rose to leave Jeff's office, he volunteered encouraging information: "We don't process misdemeanor probation through the FBI." I didn't reply, but I realized that he might be sympathetic, even an ally to my political views and actions.

I was working to pick up the pieces of my life, and my decision to begin again in California had everything to do with establishing a relationship with my now ten-year-old daughter. Each time I had been in the Bay Area over the previous five years I had visited Michelle, and wherever I was, I wrote regularly and sent gifts. Later, I would learn that her father had intercepted the letters and gifts, and that she'd had no sense of the continuity and connection I'd imagined. I was maintaining with her. From Jimmy's point of view, I was a dangerous influence, or even worse, an irresponsible hippy.

During my stint at Fairchild the previous spring, I had taken Michelle to Disneyland and visited her regularly, intending to remain in the area permanently. Although that plan had been interrupted by my trial, I was back on track now. Routiney, I drove to the Bay Area to see Michelle. I took her to dinner, shopping, to a movie, or ice-skating. I became the indulgent absentee parent: guilt-ridden, trying to please, buying love,

attempting to compensate for lost time, empty and lonely afterward. I felt a growing sympathy for divorced fathers.

Initially, during the period when my hand was healing and I couldn't do much, I wandered around in the Tahoe clubs and sat at the bars, people-watching. I enjoyed the womblike atmosphere and the music of the machines and jackpot bells, the Keno boards flashing numbers, and the masses of strangers. Behind those glittery low ceilings hid a maze of cat-walks, the mirrored ceiling was actually one-way glass. The fact that I was being watched from above intrigued me. Sometimes I imagined myself up there watching the people, watching myself.

A shriek of joy or of horror, and the sounds of winning and losing broke the lull of the womb. The workers gathered around lucky or unlucky players to praise or commiserate, like nurses tending to mental patients in an insane asylum. The casino struck me as a cross between a mental institution and the stock market.

I went along with Jan to play Bingo at the Sahara Club. I didn't develop an interest in the game, and I lost \$35 on my occasional boards. But the third time we went, Jan borrowed money from me, promising to double it. It appeared to me that she won constantly and was always in control of a mountain of chips and silver dollars. She was never upset and always generous with the tokens. But suddenly my \$500 vanished. Jan laughed and said, "Don't worry, I'll win it all back and more." But of course, she didn't. Jan referred to my loss as an "investment." In Tahoe, gaming was the poor man's stock market and the rich man's Everest.

Living at Tahoe was like glimpsing the end days of the Roman Empire, even the gladiators. On Thanksgiving 1972, the Muhammad Ali and Bob Foster fight took place at the Sahara. Ali was one of my heroes, not for boxing, but for resisting the draft and opposing the Vietnam War. For that he had been stripped of his heavyweight title; now he was fighting his way to the top again. He apologized for nothing, and as support for the war declined, Ali's heroic status soared.

The High Sierra Room of the Sahara Club was the scene of the fight. Jan's husband had given me a ringside seat. I had never witnessed a boxing